System

The new look

Ibrahim Kamara & Rafael Pavarotti

Issue No. 16 – £24 / €27 / $29

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Table of contents

70 The new look. Ibrahim Kamara & Rafael Pavarotti.
By Rana Toofanian. Portraits by Juergen Teller. Photographs by Rafael Pavarotti. Styling by Ibrahim Kamara.

172 A letter from... Beijing
By Hung Huang. Photograph by Erwan Frotin.

174 A letter from... Detroit
By Mahmoud 'Mo' Mfinanga. Photograph by Erwan Frotin.

176 A letter from... Paris
By Mohamed Megdoul. Photograph by Erwan Frotin.

178 Momentum. Thebe Magugu.
By Hans Ulrich Obrist. Portrait by Kristin-Lee Moolman. Photographs by Tim Elkaïm. Styling by Agata Belcen.

198 Haute couture. Adeline André.
By Olivier Saillard. Photographs by Maxime Imbert. Styling by Camille Bidault-Waddington.

214 Portfolio. Mario Sorrenti & Vinson Fraley, Jr.
Photographs by Mario Sorrenti. Interview by Mahoro Seward.

238 The legendary. Mark Lebon.
By Jerry Stafford and Carmen Hall. Photographs by Mark Lebon. Styling by Amanda Harlech.

309 The Shopping Questionnaire. Bryanboy.
By Loïc Prigent.

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PARIS
the saddler's spirit
Photographie retouchée
Publicis EtNous

‘Where would you most like to travel once restrictions are eased?’

Agata Belcen, a London-based stylist and senior fashion editor at large at *AnOther Magazine*, is contemplating Patagonia.

Paris-based stylist **Camille Bidault-Waddington** will go ‘anywhere I can see the horizon and the sea’.

Johnny Dufort is a British photographer and going back to the Alps as soon as possible.

Tim Elkaïm is a Paris-based photographer who would like to return to Kenya.

For Italian fashion critic **Angelo Flaccavento**, it’s not the destination that counts but the idea of being on the road.

Photographer **Erwan Frotin** is based in Lausanne, Switzerland, and planning on seeing Iran.

Carmen Hall is a London-based writer living in the moment, but gravitating towards Jamaica.

Amanda Harlech is a British stylist and ‘would love to travel the length and breadth of the British Isles, but also dive into clear blue waters’.

Hung Huang is an American-Chinese television host, author, actress, blogger, publisher and media figure for whom it can only be Paris.

Maxime Imbert is a London-based photographer who would like to make that trip to Japan that he booked.

Ibrahim Kamara, a London-based stylist, is hoping to travel to the Amazon for Christmas, surrounded by nature.

Photographer and filmmaker **Mark Lebon** says it’s the inward journey that counts: ‘It lasts beyond a lifetime and brings lasting joy to me and those around me.’

Mohamed Megdoul is editor-in-chief of *Immersion* magazine and will head to Issenadjene, a village east of Algiers.

Mahmoud ‘Mo’ Mfinanga is a Brooklyn and Los Angeles-based photo editor and photographer who is looking forward to visiting family and friends in London.

Kristin-Lee Moolman is a South African photographer and filmmaker who would love to see Thailand again.

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator and artistic director of Serpentine Galleries and will be off to Sils Maria: ‘As Giovanni Segantini said: “I want to see the mountains.”’

Rafael Pavarotti, a London-based photographer, intends to get back to the Amazon to ‘bathe in the unconditional love’ of his family.

Olivier Saillard is a fashion curator and historian, and artistic director of J.M. Weston; he’d like to travel ‘to the past – a long, long time ago’.

London-based writer **Mahoro Seward** dreams of his birthplace, Luanda: ‘I crave the heat of its people and climate, tempered by the cool Atlantic breeze.’

Mario Sorrenti is an Italian-American photographer who’s off to Spain as soon as he can.

Jerry Stafford is a stylist and creative director who would love to travel back to 1976 to see David Bowie’s *Isolar* tour at the Empire Pool, Wembley.

Lotta Volkova is a Russian stylist ‘longing to get back to the United States, especially after the new president’s election!’

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Masthead

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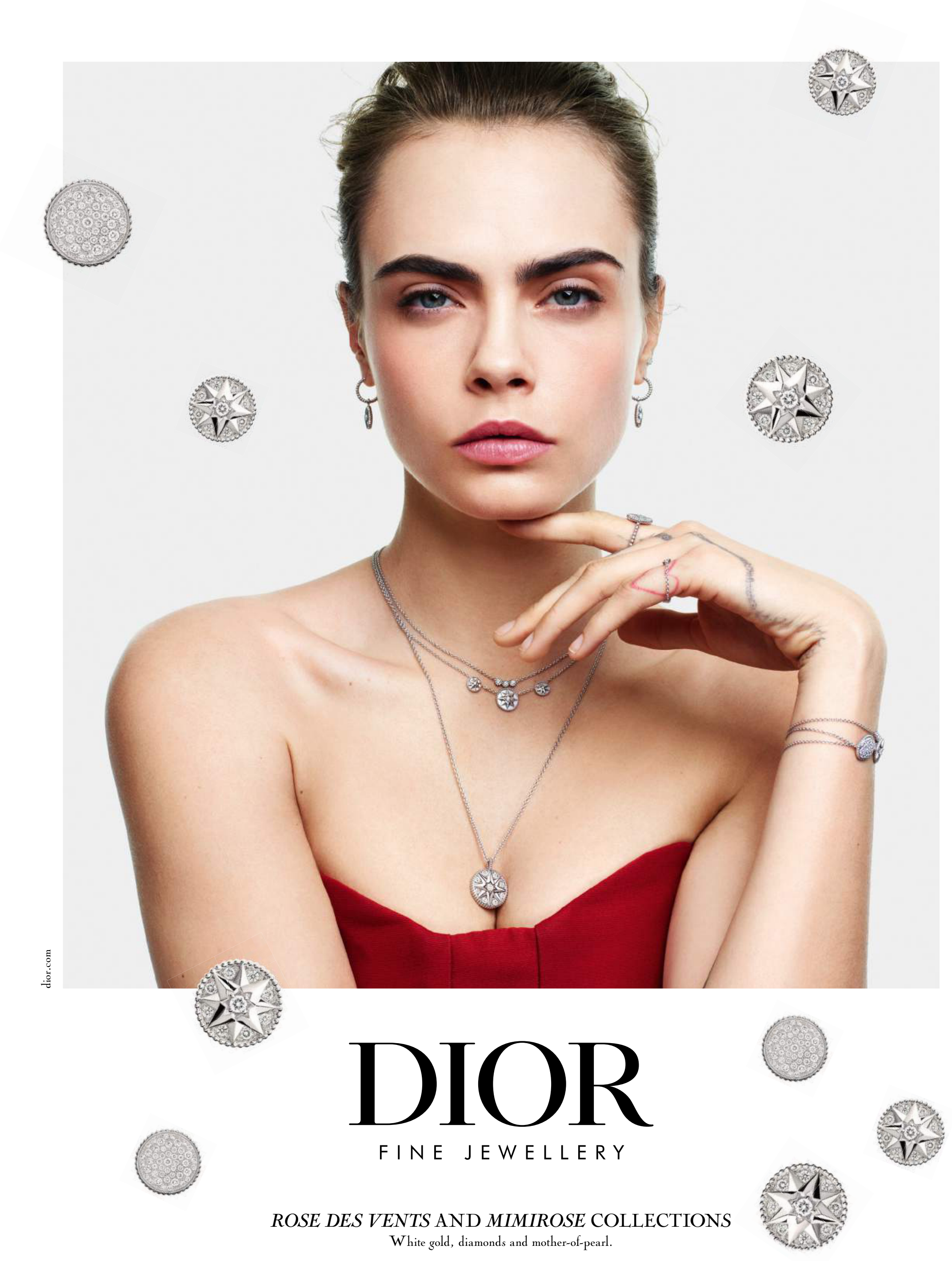
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As times change, so too do the people who represent those times and transformations.

Over the past 18 months, stylist Ibrahim Kamara and photographer Rafael Pavarotti have emerged as a potent new force in fashion image-making. Until recently, creatives from places such as West Africa (Ib is from Sierre Leone) or the Amazon (Raf from Belém in Brazil) have been largely ignored by the industry's historical hubs. But things are changing, and the work of Kamara and Pavarotti is accelerating this development, while preparing the terrain for others to come.

The imagery they create together is a vibrant mixture of history, culture, fantasy and hope that recontextualizes fashion within a new set of codes and source material. It's a timely re-examination of a visual and stylistic language that sometimes feels like it's on the verge of stagnation.

As society becomes increasingly defined by the democratizing power of digital communications, fashion too is starting to embrace influences from far and wide. Ib and Raf originally 'met' over Instagram back in 2018. Just imagine what other intercontinental dialogues are taking place right now, what new ideas and perspectives are being honed, which voices and cultures are going to shape tomorrow. In a year devoid of much good news, here's some: the fashion world just got more worldly.

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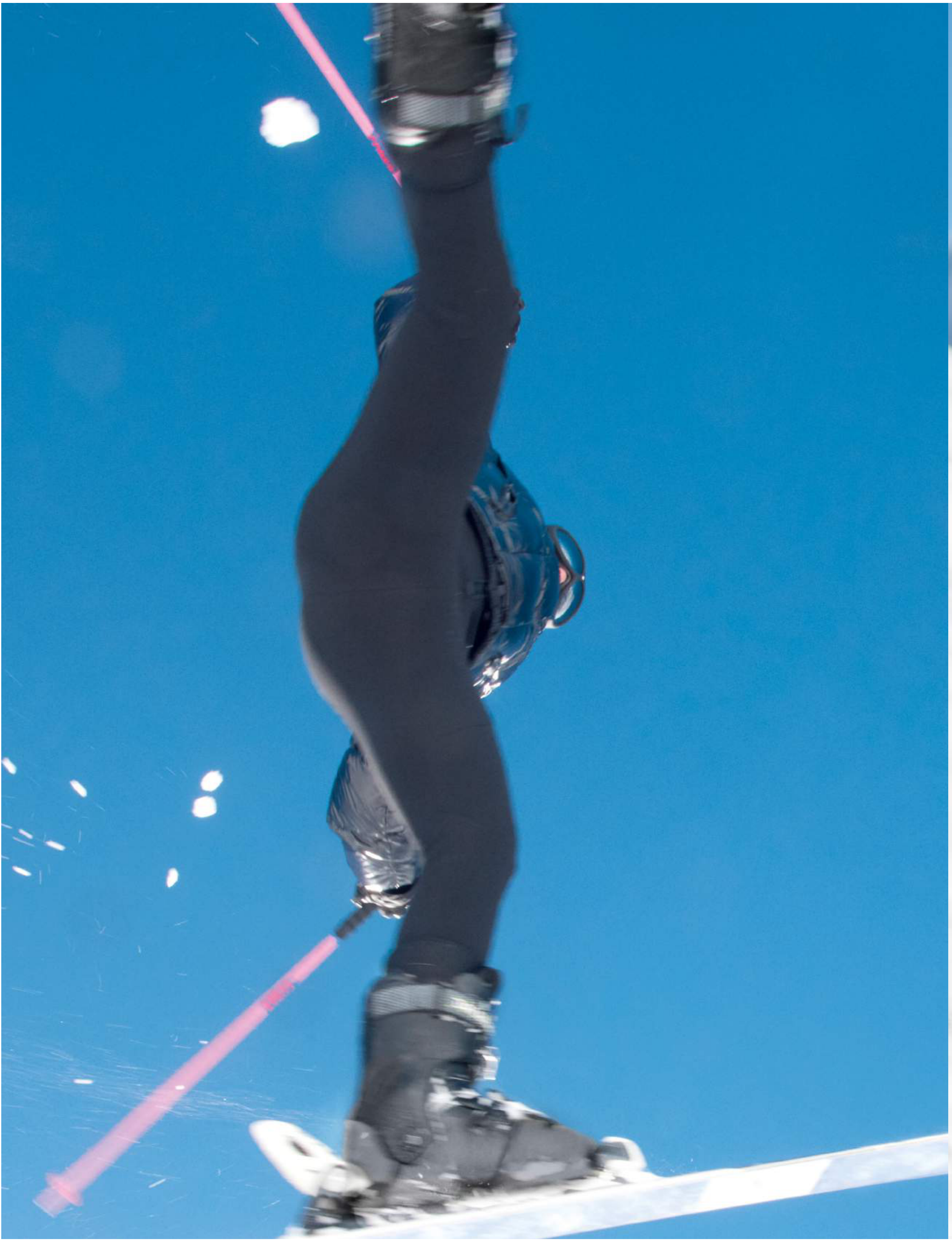
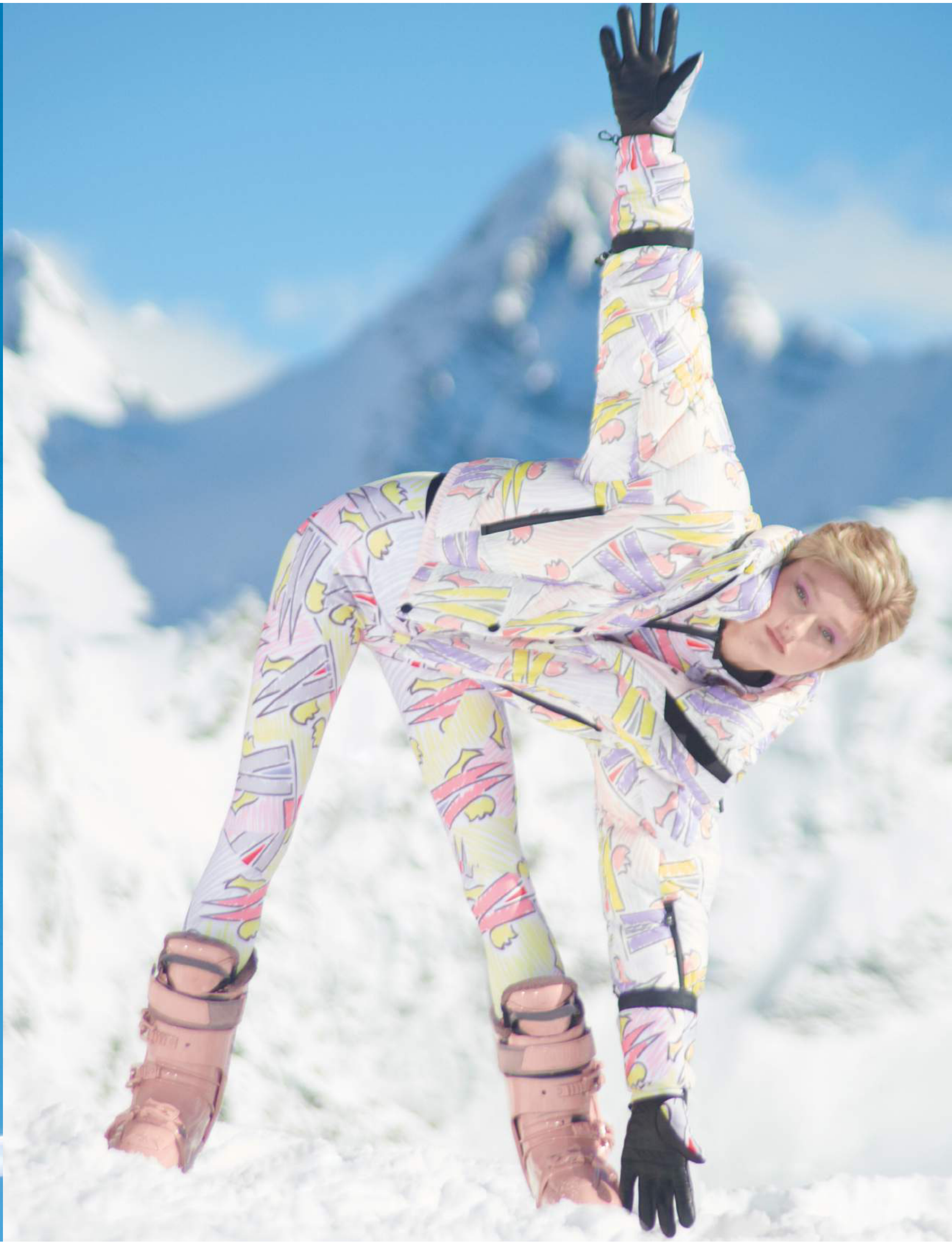
3 Moncler Grenoble

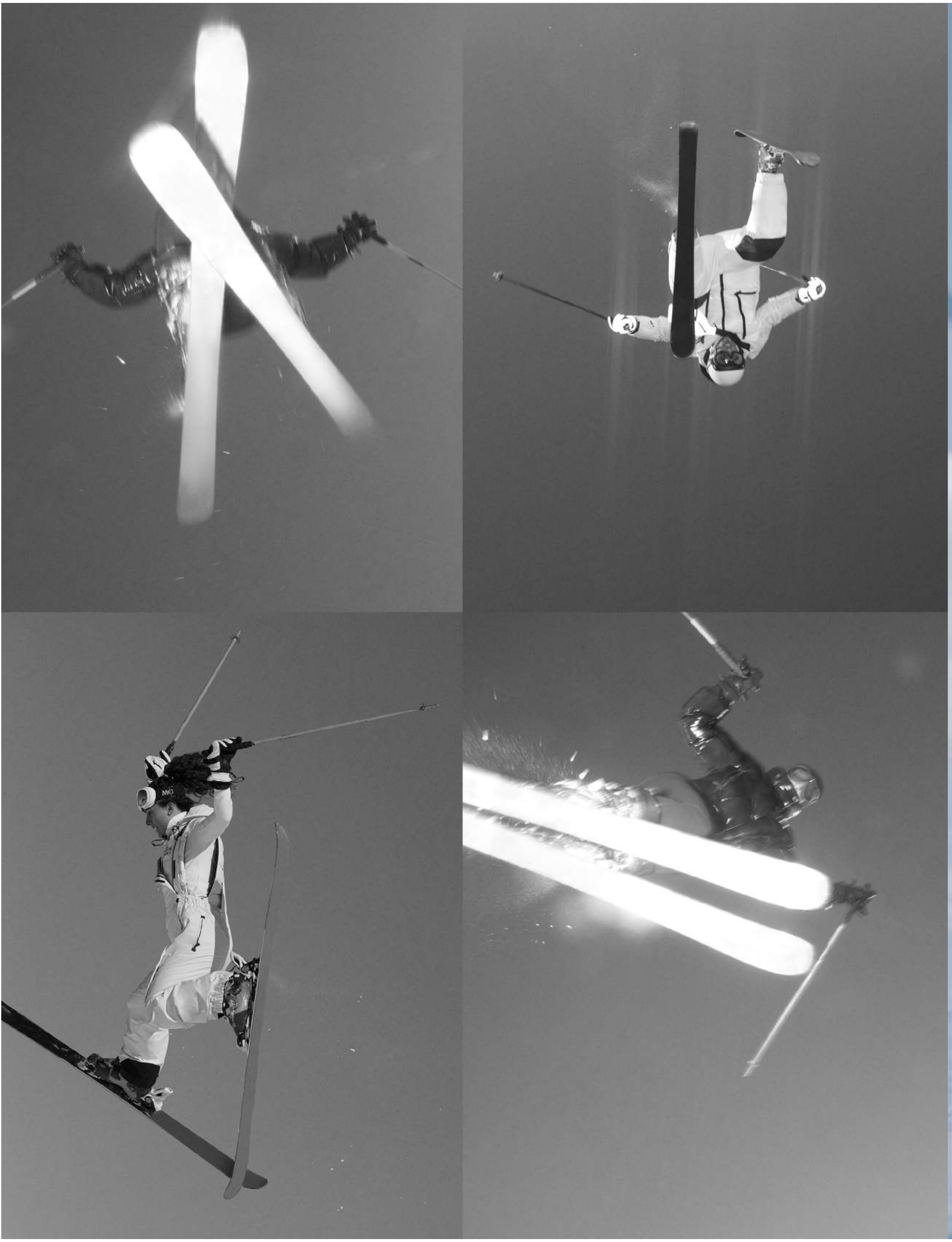
3

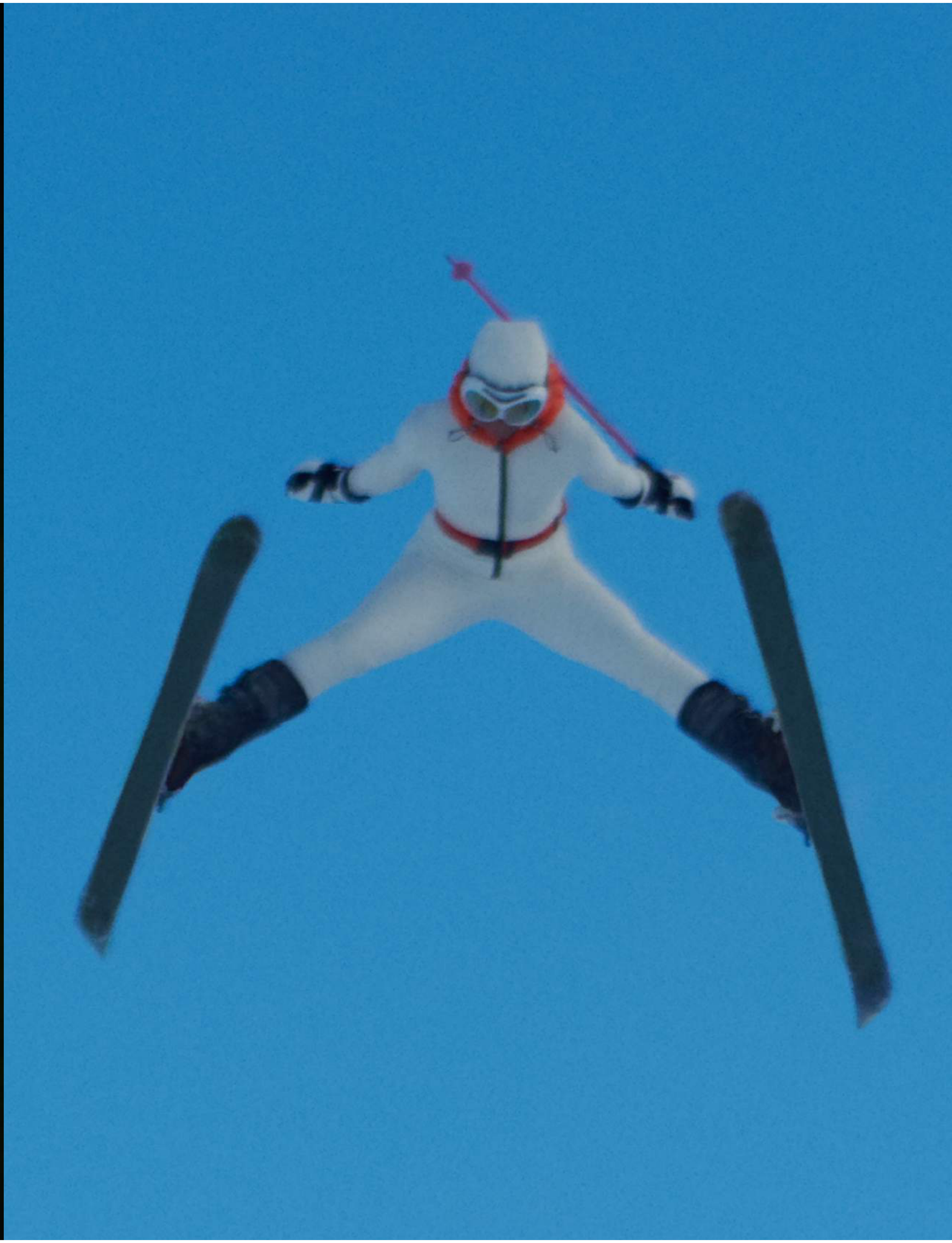
MONCLER
GRENOBLE

Photographs by Johnny Dufort
Styling by Lotta Volkova
Interview by Angelo Flaccavento









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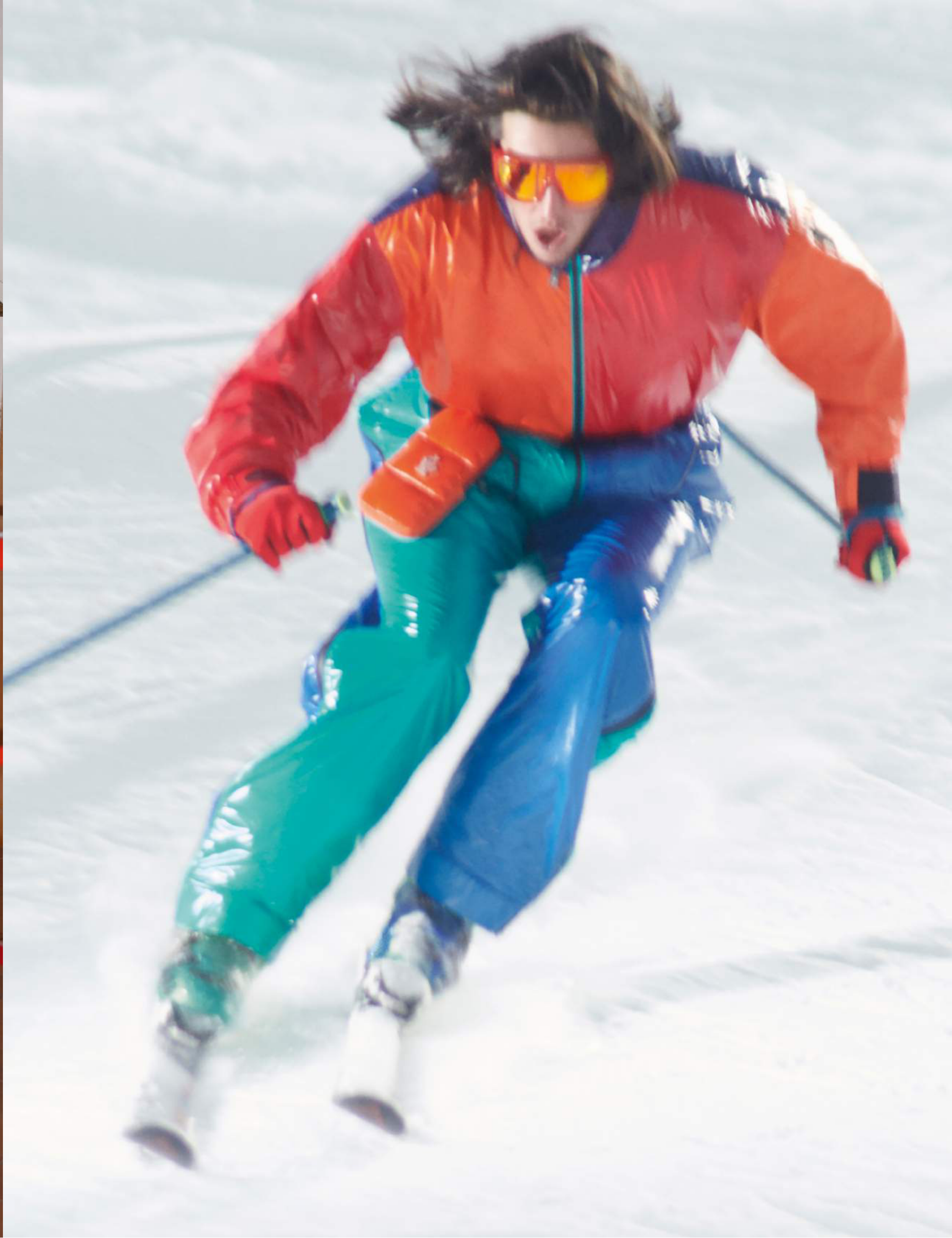
VALGARDENA 1970
CAMPIONATI DEL MONDO



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All clothes: 3 Moncler Grenoble.

Photography: Johnny Dufort @ Management Artists. Styling: Lotta Volkova @ Management Artists.
Make-up artist: Inge Grognard. Hairstylist: Virginie Pinto Moreira.
Executive producer: Lumen Lab – Emanuela Matranga. Production manager: Simone Cedroni. Assistant producer: Oliver Carmi.
Location manager: Joseph Geminale. Photography assistants: Jack Day, Alberto Gualtieri, Stefano Mattiocco.
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Production assistants: Domenico Filippone, Rodolfo Sessa, Michele Peretti.
Models: Marie-Lou Gomis @ The Claw, Litay @ IMG Models, Danilo @ System Agency.
Professional skiers: Monica Biondi, Andrea Rossi, Elisa Maria Nakab.

Sharp-tongued and equipped with a five-star fashion pedigree that includes being the original designer of Prada Sport back when the line was launched in the 1990s, Sandro Mandrino is arguably the unsung hero of the Moncler universe. Since 2010, he has designed Moncler Grenoble, the house's core collection of technical skiwear and a 'technological and stylistic innovation lab' also bringing performance clothing to the street. It was launched at a time when owner Remo Ruffini was putting in place his wider plan for Moncler, transforming it into a house about more than simply the down jacket that had first been coveted by young fashion-loving *paninari* in 1980s Italy. When Mandrino launched Moncler Grenoble, it was, together with the now discontinued Gamme Bleue and Gamme Rouge lines, the main communications vector for Ruffini's global vision and became notorious for grandiose runway shows in New York (the first featured a four-storey tableau vivant featuring 100 models and spotlighted from a helicopter hovering above). In those theatrical, testosterone-fuelled set-ups, the functionality of the pieces regularly went unnoticed, even if Mandrino's discreet single-mindedness meant it was ever present. Indeed, function and credibility are the words he still most uses about his work at Moncler, concepts so mundane and old school that they actually sound refreshingly progressive in this age of banal clothing seemingly designed almost solely to photograph well.

It's perhaps telling then that Mandrino recently produced an extra Moncler Grenoble collection for another of the house's projects, the more avant-garde – and certainly more headline-grabbing – Moncler Genius. Launched in 2018, Moncler Genius invites different designers – including, so far, Jonathan Anderson, Simone Rocha, Hiroshi Fujiwara and Craig Green – to add their own identities to the house's, producing collections that Moncler has described as 'a curation of the now'. Unlike others in the growing stable of Genius designers, Mandrino brings a decade of insider expertise in creative functionality to his collection, resulting in a high-tech, yet fashion-forward collection for the slopes featuring unexpected fabrics, bold prints, and inventive colours.

System recently caught up with Mandrino on Zoom to explore the form and function of Moncler Grenoble and understand why the tension between fashion and performance has never felt so timely.

Angelo Flaccavento: First things first. How does Moncler Grenoble fit into the broader Moncler universe?
Sandro Mandrino: Moncler Grenoble is linked to mountains, and mountains and skiing are Moncler's point of departure.[1] I've always liked to work on projects that have a wide reach, because then you can work on everything from accessories to outerwear to trousers. That was the biggest shock when I got to Moncler, starting with just this one thing: the down jacket. When I first met Remo, I was really intrigued by his almost innocent vision of what he saw as a universal jacket. With Moncler Grenoble, my job has been to set that jacket within a wider framework, and the line is perhaps the only place within the Moncler universe where you can create a total look. I realize that saying 'total look' might sound comical these days, but we've tried really hard to convey the message that this is a complete collection and everything in it – the jackets, trousers, sweatshirts – are complex products. So the jackets, for example, aren't just simple ski jackets; they can work on and off the slopes, and on the street. This process with Moncler Grenoble has been really time-consuming, and I still don't think we're quite there.

Moncler Grenoble is both part of the Genius project and a standalone line. What is its identity, then?
With Genius, Remo is giving designers from outside the company an opportunity to give their point of view on what Moncler stands for. Genius is his way of defining the DNA of an updated brand with multiple identities: the idea of 'one house, different voices'. The fact that Moncler Grenoble has been brought into the Genius line has inevitably meant that I've had to find other ways of envisaging fashion. The challenge Remo has always given me is to expand the brand's limits, while retaining its overall credibility; that's something really important to both him and me. Personally, my Genius collection is like the tip of the iceberg – underneath it is the whole Moncler Grenoble world we've built. That's what I like most about it.

Who is the Moncler Grenoble consumer? Do you have a specific public in mind when you're designing the line or do you think the objects will find one by themselves?
I like the products to find their own trajectory. For years, I've visited our stores without saying who I am or what I do, so I can discreetly try to understand how the products impact on consumers. I like creating products with a wide appeal. Sometimes I'll spend too much time thinking a product through and end up with something consumers can't understand. That's when I kick myself because I know it could have appealed to more people. I am lucky to be working on technical products because it means that I'm dealing with certain consumers who are perhaps slightly less fashion-oriented and more interested in performance. Fashion these days can be alienating rather than appealing, whereas I'm trying to create clothes that remain functional while appealing to as wide a public as possible. This isn't the time to be overemphasizing the personal in your work.

'Moncler Grenoble is my own "island"
in the middle of the broader Moncler universe.
Logistically, even, we're set apart from the others.'

You do seem to approach fashion like a design architect, always keeping in mind practicality and functionality. For each project, do you begin with total freedom and then edit by thinking about function or are these different demands all running along parallel tracks in your mind?
I have parallel tracks in my head for months. There are things I can start developing immediately, as I know that the machine I work within is complicated and will only move if I use the right codes. Then there are things I work on in a much more tortuous way. I'll work with images and references that I keep on blending. Maybe I'll start by launching some mock-ups, some try-outs, things whose purpose even I don't understand sometimes. You know, Grenoble is my own 'island' in the middle of Moncler. Logistically, even, we're set apart from the others. Over the years, I've managed to retain the codes that I brought with me, 10 or 12 years ago, when I started working with Remo, and when everything that's now happening here was still a long way off.

Tell me a bit about your own career leading up to Moncler.
I started in fashion 33 years ago, which seems a lifetime ago. It was the 1980s and I was totally in love with the brand Romeo Gigli. I didn't know how to design as such, so I took a design course in Milan, and I did well; I was one of the better students from the start. Then I was taken on at Valentino within Gruppo Finanziario Tessile [which produced the label's ready-to-wear lines]; so my start in fashion came on the production side, not the design side. After Valentino, I was really lucky to begin at Gigli in 1992, which for me at that time was like having a vision of the Madonna. At that point, Romeo was one of the most interesting designers around. He was an outsider with an amazing ability to tell stories that were almost photographically visual, even though he was more interested in creating those narratives using fabrics, with colours and shapes. I learned so much from Romeo, particularly about having a pragmatic approach to materials, how to treat colours in fabric, and how to use accessories.

How did that pragmatism influence your design ideas?
That period taught me never to start something without considering how it can be produced. With Romeo, I could be pragmatic *and* imaginative, because he was telling such enchanting tales. In 1996, I went to Prada at the beginnings of Prada clothing. The business was tiny; it had only done one season of menswear. [Prada CEO] Patrizio Bertelli took me onto his team alongside Neil Barrett [then designer of Prada Uomo] and made sure we didn't fight. He said to me, 'OK, you do something that we'll call Montagna, and Neil will carry on doing menswear.' So that's how Prada Sport came about, almost with a stroke of luck.

How would you say those previous experiences have informed the way you approach your vision for Moncler Grenoble?
At Moncler, what I want to create has to be practical and useful, but also playful without being bratty. I like to have an approach that is both amused and amusing. Moncler Grenoble has obviously evolved over time; it's not what it was 10 years ago, when it was about doing shows in New York, making things for their shock value, even though hardly anyone saw them. I mean, I do like to provoke, but much more importantly, I like my work to be seen, to be touched, to be worn, to be tried on. I don't like what I see in many shows, the contrived nature of them, the things that have been produced solely for their 'wow' factor. Here we send everything to labs to be tested for functionality: heat retention, waterproofing, how comfortable it is on the interior. Over the last few years we've included performance indicators in our clothing, which authenticates it as skiwear. It has to work well in the cold, but then if it heats up 10 degrees, you don't want to get too hot; if you get wet, the jacket can't get too heavy, because as Remo always says, physical lightness is the real luxury. With Moncler Grenoble, we are always trying to keep the bar as high as possible. Otherwise, we'd be abandoning our core, our DNA.

How would you describe that DNA today? How has it evolved?
The fundamental word has always been practicality, but part of that also includes departing from the usual ways of working with colour, with form, with materials. I've interiorized what practical means, so now I can apply what I've learned over the years while using more unusual materials, less predictable fabrics. But I like to use authentic things in an inauthentic way rather than saying, 'Wow, I've used sequins.'

'What I create has to be practical and useful,
but also playful without being bratty. I like to have
an approach that is both amused and amusing.'

Does creativity need limits to flourish? Do you think that the greater the limits, the more creativity can flourish? The late Enzo Mari would say that what's now being taught in fashion and design schools is the kind of creativity that spins without a reason. Students are trained to spin like tops around something without realizing that the more mundane something is, the more inventive you can be with it, because you have to work within the boundaries of that object's function. Do you ever find yourself imposing even more limits on something to make it even more powerful?
I know that sometimes I'll say, 'No, we have to do it this way so we can say this' – even if that means it's less commercial, less direct, less accessible. It's a form of self-harm actually! I remember with Miuccia [Prada] that sometimes even when something was beautiful, she'd cancel it. If something was more contorted, it intrigued her, and she'd say, 'It's so wrong, it's right.' Sometimes now if I see something as too commercial, it can annoy me, so I'll change it. I do sometimes impose limits because it's a way of showing that in reality there is no limit. The work becomes repetitive and boring otherwise, and the last thing I want is to be bored. If that ever happens I'll go off and grow tomatoes.

Your insistence on maintaining credibility is striking, because in fashion these days it's a value that is easily forgotten or simply distorted. What for you is credibility inside a brand? Is it an ethical code, an aesthetic code, a moral imperative?
Definitely an imperative. My benchmark is always a desire to create something that people love; I don't want people to be disappointed. I'm also really respectful of Moncler and a certain gentleman called Remo Ruffini because I know I have this brand behind me. What creates that credibility more than anything is this company, which has launched so many visionary concepts to date and, as it evolves, continues to conjure up more.

MONCLER
MONCLER
MONCLER

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1. Moncler was founded in 1952 by René Ramillon and André Vincent in Monestier-de-Clermont, a small Alpine town 40 kilometres south of Grenoble, the city from which Mandrino's collection takes its name. It was bought in 2003 by Italian businessman Remo Ruffini and floated on the Milan stock market in December 2013.

‘There are many ways of seeing.’

Stylist Ibrahim Kamara and photographer Rafael Pavarotti are creating a new fashion image-making vernacular.

Text and interview by Rana Toofanian
Photography by Juergen Teller
Creative partner Dovile Drizyte

It is perhaps no surprise that stylist Ibrahim Kamara and photographer Rafael Pavarotti should emerge as two of the most compelling voices in fashion image-making in a year so unrelentingly focused on reality. A year whose events have forced many around the globe and in the fashion industry into a fierce examination of past, present and future. Their increasingly sought-after collaborative lens is based upon a shared desire to harness fashion and fantasy to explore new ways of seeing the world. In their arresting fictional panoramas, every frame, character, look and symbol acts like a prism refracting social and cultural issues.

Although the duo hails from different continents – Kamara from Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Pavarotti from Belém, a city on the edge of the Amazon rainforest – their creative partnership, which began back in 2018, has always felt intuitive. Kamara first contacted Pavarotti on Instagram after coming across a shoot the photographer had done for *Vogue Brasil*: ‘I just saw myself in Raf’s world. His pictures reminded me of home.’ Shortly after, Kamara journeyed the six thousand miles to meet Pavarotti for a series of shoots focused on Black and indigenous culture in Brazil. That initial encounter marked the photographer’s first return to his Amazonian homeland in 10 years and the resulting body of work – which featured Pavarotti’s family, childhood friends and community – set the paradigm for their rich, distinctive brand of image-making: a powerful alliance centred on an unequivocal embrace of their respective cultures, histories and experiences.

Today, having transcended obstacles of geography – Pavarotti recently moved to London and now lives near Kamara – and language – ‘we have never let language stop the way we communicate; we don’t need an interpreter to hang out’ – they continue to bring to life worlds, characters and stories that reach far beyond the pages of the magazines in which they are published. They remain steadfast in their vision to cultivate a new language for a new era. ‘What we are doing today is creating a legacy for the next generation,’ says Pavarotti. ‘It’s a blueprint for a new world order. It’s a shared dream.’

Photography assistant: Tom Ortiz.
Post-production: Catalin Plesa at Quickfix.

Rana Toofanian: Let's start at the beginning. Ib, you first reached out to Raf on Instagram back in 2018. What was it about his work that resonated with you?
Ibrahim Kamara: I just loved Raf's world. I saw myself in it. The photograph of the girl dancing with the drum [in Pavarotti's 2017 *Vogue Brasil* editorial][1] – reminded me of home. That picture represents my childhood, too. If there is one thing we are known for in West Africa, it is partying. Where I grew up in Sierra Leone, we also have parades, like carnival in Brazil, and all these lanterns go through the streets, and people dance. It is a massive celebration. So, when I saw Rafael's photo, it resonated with me. It instantly brought back memories of experiences I had lived in Sierra Leone and in Gambia. It felt like our worlds were colliding – and I just knew I wanted to work with him.

‘I just jumped on the back of a very speedy motorbike with Raf and off we went. It was crazy; I would never have done that in Sierra Leone!’

What was your opening gambit, Ib?
Ibrahim: ‘Hey! I love your work so much, bye!' [Laughs] I am quite shy when I reach out to people!
Rafael Pavarotti: That was it! I was very shy, too. I just responded: ‘Oh my gosh! I love your work too!' Later on, I thought to myself, ‘What do I say to Ibrahim Kamara?'

Raf, how familiar were you with Ib's work at that time?
Rafael: In 2017, I was at lunch with a friend who introduced me to Ib's work; what he was doing was already a huge reference for Black culture and youth in Brazil at the time. I was living in São Paulo then. It was a moment when things were really coming together in Brazil – in terms of fashion and art – everyone was showing their faces and finding spaces. Ib's work had the same effect on me. I saw myself in it, and I knew that it was important.

What was it like the first time you met in real life?
Ibrahim: I travelled to Brazil specifically to photograph two stories with Raf for *i-D* and *Double*. It is really insane, travelling to the other side of the world to meet someone for the first time, and within the first few hours, the first few minutes even, you just get on! It was electric. We just started laughing. It was like little children coming to play for the first time. There was just this instant trust and connection.

How did that trust manifest itself?
Ibrahim: I just jumped on the back of a very speedy motorbike with Raf and off we went. It was crazy; I would never have done that in my whole time in Sierra Leone! In England, it's all ‘health and safety', but all of that just went out of the window when I met him in Belém[2]. It was so liberating.

Was there a language barrier?
Rafael: From the moment we met, it was as if we had already known each other for years. Our friendship and complicity just makes it easy for us to understand one another. We are present in each other's company without fear or shame.
Ibrahim: We have never let language stop the way we communicate. We always just find a way to get it and to understand. [To Raf] I don't need an interpreter to hang out with you. We can hang out with no one else there, and we can just talk, and talk and talk and laugh! I think we really understand each other because it is the language of love and creativity and it's pure.

Raf, that first shoot with Ib also signalled your first time back home to Belém in a decade. How was that experience for you?
Rafael: Once I got out of my hometown, I went away for many long stretches. There was a period where I felt really hurt. I had doubts about life and the industry. Around the time I met Ib, I was on a spiritual journey, where I was healing, and falling in love with who I was and where I was from. When Ibrahim said, ‘Let's shoot the people you love!' I knew Belém was where we had to go. Returning home represented the beginning of a new era for me – one where I was looking into myself, and into things that were a part of me. We photographed my mother, my neighbour, my friends and everyone who raised me. It was this magical moment. Everything seems very different after that.

That's quite an intimate way to meet and work together for the first time. Ib, how do you feel that experience informed your creative partnership with Raf?
Ibrahim: Rafael was very generous and hospitable. I saw he loved life; he loved to laugh, and dance. We have a lot of similarities, because I love life, too. I love people. In Sierra Leone, the community is very generous. We all share with one another. We all dance and celebrate together. That's what I got from being in Belém; it's a very celebratory place. They are all very proud of who they are there. Working with Rafael and all the people he loves felt so natural – as if I was back home in Freetown. I don't know how else I can put it. I just immersed myself into his world and experienced everything he experiences, which is very similar to my own upbringing, and that was the most beautiful connection for me, because that really helped shape our work.

Raf, you also travelled to Ib's hometown earlier this year to shoot a story on youth culture in Sierra Leone for *i-D*.
Ibrahim: [To Raf] I still can't believe you came to Freetown! It's crazy. I will let Raf speak.

‘People might be shocked by some of the props and subjects that feature in our work. The guns are a part of Raf's world and also a part of mine.’

Rafael: Working on that project in Freetown with Ib, being there with someone I love, with my brother, and witnessing how it was all connected, where everything came from – that was a really powerful experience.

One of the things reflected in your work, but also in observing you as friends and creative collaborators, is how deeply you embrace each other's respective cultures, histories and experiences.
Rafael: It's a celebration of both our similarities and our differences.
Ibrahim: It's really rare to meet and work with people who you share such an intimate connection with. We have a pure respect for each other's backgrounds, even though I am from West Africa and Raf is from the Amazon. We have really similar experiences and backgrounds. I have lived things that he has been through and vice versa. We both live in the West now, but we have both dreamed of where our lives could take us. We always find a middle ground to connect both of our worlds – a shared vision, a shared anger, a shared love, a shared question.
Rafael: A shared dream. That's something that has really connected us from the beginning: dreams. They are not just our dreams, but the dreams of our generation, of those who want to change the world. When I was growing up and got into photography, I had no references, and that shapes you in a very strange way. Whenever I am working with Ib, I think about my younger brother, my cousins and all the kids around us. Sometimes you receive messages from amazing young boys and girls from all over the world thanking you for the work you're doing or for giving them someone to look up to. I got one from a girl in Nepal. How beautiful it is that a message can travel this way? What we create reflects our reality and our dreams. We're just sharing it in this space called ‘fashion'. It might not be to everyone's taste, but it's what we have lived, are living and hope to live one day.
Ibrahim: I also grew up with imagery that wasn't mine, that I couldn't reference. It spoke to me and I appreciated the beauty in the work, but I didn't see myself in it. There is a beauty in being able to create images that you see yourself in. Can you imagine if it was balanced? How empowering that would be to all the kids around the world. Our work is not about Blackness, it is beyond that, it's a celebration of beauty. I want people to see our work and be blown away by the vision, by the beauty in it. I hope it eventually becomes normal for everyone in the world to consume it like that, to look past whatever prejudice they have and just celebrate its beauty. For me, being in this space is about creating new references and educational content. If what we create empowers and inspires people two generations on from now, then I think we will have done our job. It's not about glory or gains, it's about wanting the images to be important.

How does the process of creating a new body of work together begin?
Rafael: We have the same energy, whether we are working together or chilling at home. We're always enjoying ourselves; we're always creating together. For me, it feels as if we have a very spontaneous, free way of doing things, which I think comes from being in a constant dialogue. Anything can serve as inspiration in our work: a memory, a song, a film. When we decide that we want to create something new, we find that we are just capturing everything that's around us at that point in time. It's almost mystical – as if the messages and ideas are delivered to us. As Ib has said, it's as if the narratives and characters are just manifesting in reality.
Ibrahim: At this point, it feels as if we've built a world together, so when it comes down to producing something new, things come very naturally, because it's an extension of the world and language that we've established. Of course, there

is still a lot of research and sketching that goes into what we create, but when we are in the studio, it feels very natural to be making the work. That's the best way I can explain it.

Rafael: There are many ways of seeing: there is a way of seeing through the eyes and a way of seeing through the heart.

The characters and narratives you imagine for each story are always new, but part of what sustains your world is a number of recurring motifs and props.

Ibrahim: It's not so much about the motifs specifically anymore; they are really just a part of a shared language. Some people might be shocked by some of the props and subjects that feature in our work. I wouldn't use them with anyone else. They are based on a shared experience you have to have in order to create certain things. The guns – which we first used in Belém – are a part of Raf's world and also a part of mine; that's why it's OK for us to use them as part of our world. If anything, the guns are not there to provoke, but to defend. It's about standing your ground and fighting back; that's it. For someone to think about our work as simply shocking or provocative would be a disappointment to me. To be shocking is boring, I am not interested in that. The guns are not a part of an aesthetic that can be replicated. It's something that you have either lived or haven't. They are there to make people stop and question their presence within the image.

Rafael: Even if you come from a place where you might find the presence of these weapons shocking, once you come to know the things that I know about Brazilian reality, they will not shock you any more. How many times did I see someone with a gun? This is something that I have witnessed.

Ibrahim: The characters we created in this portfolio are a bit fucked up and intense: there's this character of a king carrying a gun and a spear; it's so confusing, but somehow it all makes sense. We're living in such a tense time right now and that tension and confusion is reflected in that image for me.

Is there one image from this portfolio that you feel really expresses the moment we're in?

Ibrahim: There are a lot. For me, the photo of the nurse, is the most important one we made during this project. It's crazy that no one has spoken about that. Forget the styling. Forget the photography. The message is so strong for me in that picture. If you cannot comment on what is happening in 2020, are you for real? What year did you really live in? We are reflecting and dreaming about a lot things in this portfolio, but when you come to that image it represents a woman who saved the world. That picture represents my mother who is a nurse, and your mother, Raf, and all the immigrant mothers who do the work in 2020; all the Black and indigenous workers in hospitals around the world who are low-paid and mistreated. For me, image-making is about storytelling. It's not really my responsibility to shoot all the beautiful gowns in the world – that was not why I was born into this world. I didn't see gowns when I was young. I saw beautiful women who were married and had affairs with other men; for me, that is the kind of woman I want to dress. Not a woman, in a gown, in a studio, with no character or point of view. I get bored so easily if my mind is not being stimulated or I don't relate to something. If there's no story, I'm not interested and it doesn't make sense.

In what ways do you feel your creative partnership has evolved and how is that reflected in the work you are making today?

Ibrahim: I think we are very confident in the work we are making right now. Neither Raf nor I are from the 'elite' of this world. We both come from poor backgrounds and our parents had to struggle to get us an education. We are from nothing and yet we are so confident. We are both grown now and have really come to love ourselves. There are some days I don't look in the mirror any more because I have reached an age where I am secure in my look and what I can bring to the table. As Nina Simone said, 'Freedom is no fear.'[3] That's how it felt when we worked on this portfolio: we had no fear. Our ideas were very unfiltered. It was our world. With Rafael, it's just us making our mistakes, correcting our mistakes. I never take it personally if Raf's not into something; I only think about how I can make it better. It's actually shocking how much you can come up with when you're in an environment where there is no fear or controlling power. It's so freeing.

Rafael: The complete absence of fear allows us to be so in sync, and gives us the freedom and trust to push it as far as we want. Without fear, there is only space left to dream endlessly. When we made this portfolio, it was like being away on summer camp. We didn't rush it; we took our time. We thought about how real we wanted this story to feel. We gave so much attention and love to each model, and developed a light to bring each character we photographed to life.

Ibrahim: Raf, I've never seen you take that long to take a picture before. I was really stunned because you really took your time, just slipping into your little world. It was great because it gave me time to think. We were uninterrupted. No one was telling us we only had 20 minutes between each photo. I personally love to collaborate. I don't believe one person can make a picture. It would be crazy for me to say – 'Oh, I styled it!' – about our work. I think it is a true collaboration. The styling and the photography are a conversation. Everything is shared and I think that shows in the work. As a creative, you get to work with so many people all the time, but do you ever really stop and create a connection? I think that's what comes from finding someone with whom you also share similar values. I have so much trust in you, Raf. I never question your photography or your taste. I only trust you to make the most incredible things. There is no doubt for a second in my mind.

Rafael: There is always a moment when we look at each other and we just know that we have it.

What does the future look like for you both?

Rafael: We can't talk about the future because the future does not exist. Here we are talking, looking at each other, now. Each time Ib and I make something it reflects the current state of the world. Each time, we dream up something together and then make something real. It can never be duplicated. It's a mystery that we can talk about for hours, but never solve. How did we get here? It's just something that we have to be in and enjoy.

Ibrahim: You are right. In a way, it is almost useless to speak about the future because you really don't know what will happen. But it is always important to dream.

Rafael: Yes, let's keep dreaming together.

'Our work isn't about Blackness; it's a celebration of beauty. And if what we create inspires people two generations on, then I think we'll have done our job.'

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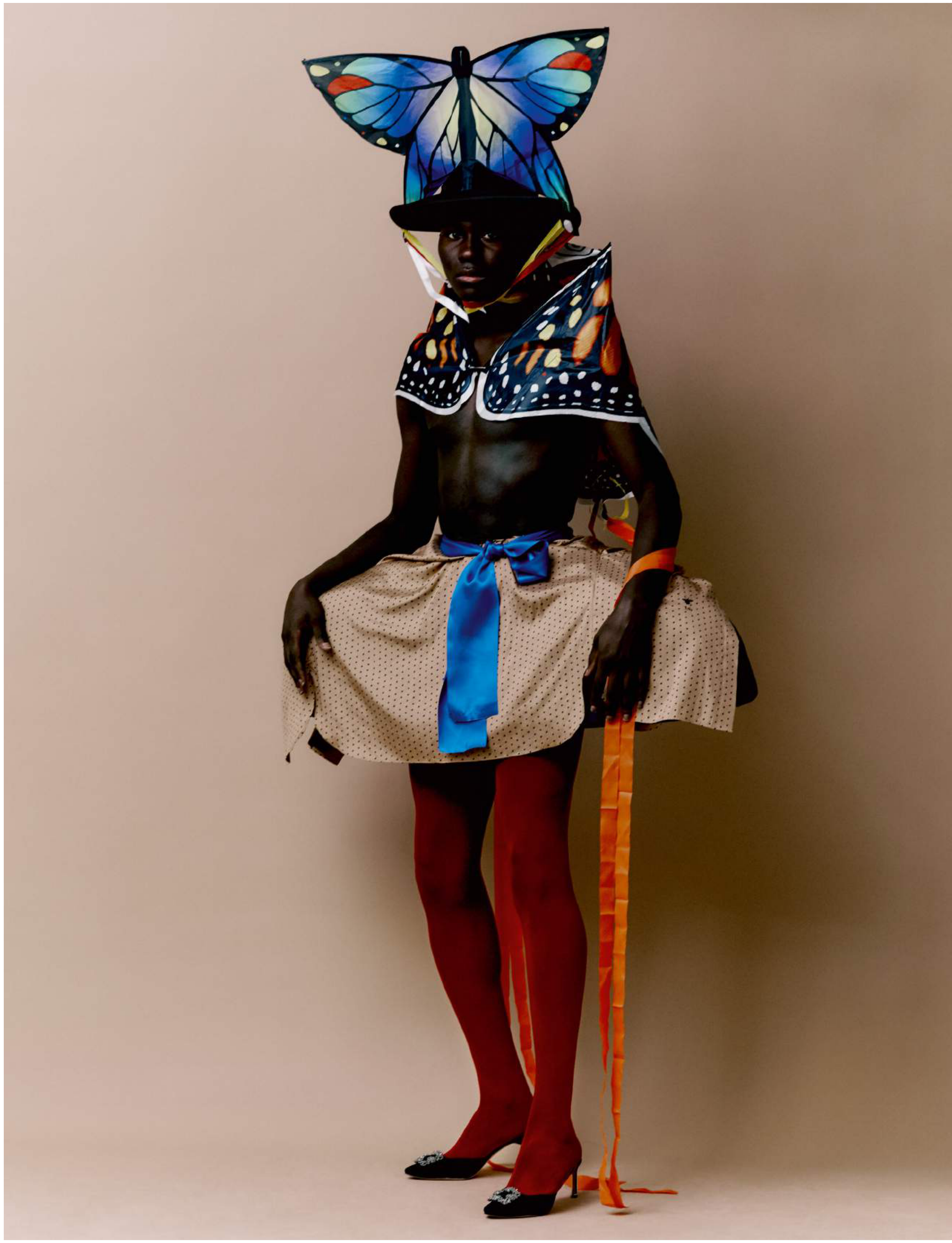
1. Published in December 2017 issue of *Vogue Brasil*, 'Rito de Passagem' features a jubilant model dancing with practitioners of capoeira, a 500-year-old Afro-Brazilian martial art, and handling traditional capoeira instruments, including the resonant, bow-like *berimbau*.

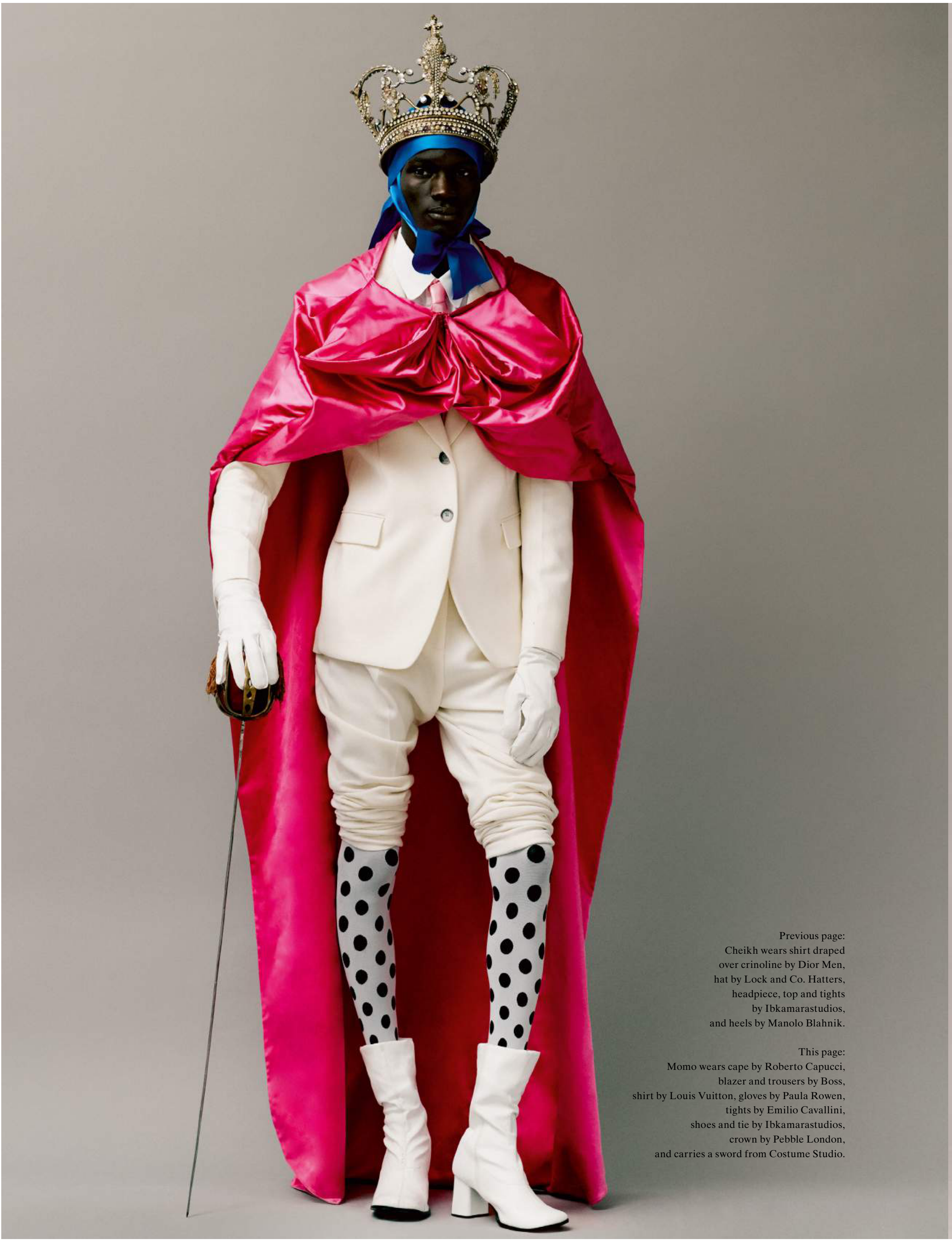
2. Home to 2.5 million people, Belém is located in the north of Brazil, by the Amazon delta, around 100 kilometres inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Its name is a variant of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, but the profusion of tropical fruit growing around the city have led to its local nickname of *Cidade das Mangueiras*, or City of Mango Trees.

3. In a 1968 interview on New York public television, legendary Black American pianist and protest singer Nina Simone was asked to define 'freedom'. After attempting to duck the question, she confronted it with characteristic intensity: 'I'll tell you what freedom is to me: no fear. I mean, *really* no fear. If I could have that [for] half of my life. No fear. Children have no fear. That's the only way I can describe it.'

‘Your dreams are my dreams.’

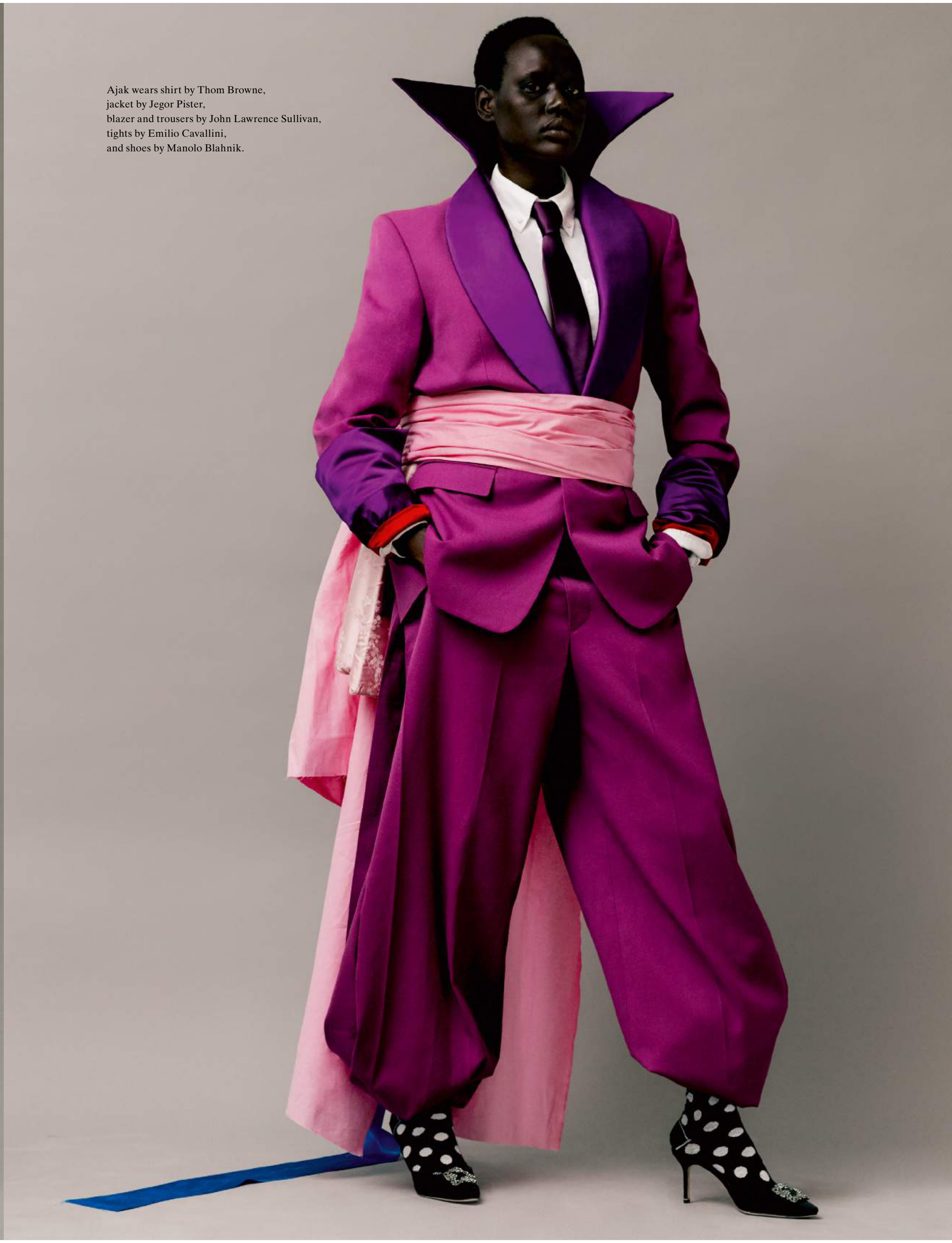


Photography by Rafael Pavarotti
Styling by Ibrahim Kamara



Previous page:
Cheikh wears shirt draped
over crinoline by Dior Men,
hat by Lock and Co. Hatters,
headpiece, top and tights
by Ibkamarastudios,
and heels by Manolo Blahnik.

This page:
Momo wears cape by Roberto Capucci,
blazer and trousers by Boss,
shirt by Louis Vuitton, gloves by Paula Rowen,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
shoes and tie by Ibkamarastudios,
crown by Pebble London,
and carries a sword from Costume Studio.



Ajak wears shirt by Thom Browne,
jacket by Jegor Pister,
blazer and trousers by John Lawrence Sullivan,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.

This page:
Omar wears jacket by Balenciaga,
shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
headpiece by Ethan Mullings,
shoes by Christian Louboutin,
and latex trousers by Richard Quinn,
and carries a bag by Miu Miu.

Opposite page:
Omar and Ottawa wear capes
and masks by Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan
and shoes by Ermenegildo Zegna.
Omar wears suit by Boss and shirt by Dunhill.
Ottawa wears blazer by Ethan Mullings,
trousers by Ibkamarastudios,
and shirt by Louis Vuitton.
Spear from Costume Studio.

Niko wears headwrap and belt by Ibkamarastudios, cape and jacket from Costume Studio, and shoes by Louis Vuitton.

Ottawa wears a full look by Balenciaga and cape and gas mask by Ibkamarastudios.

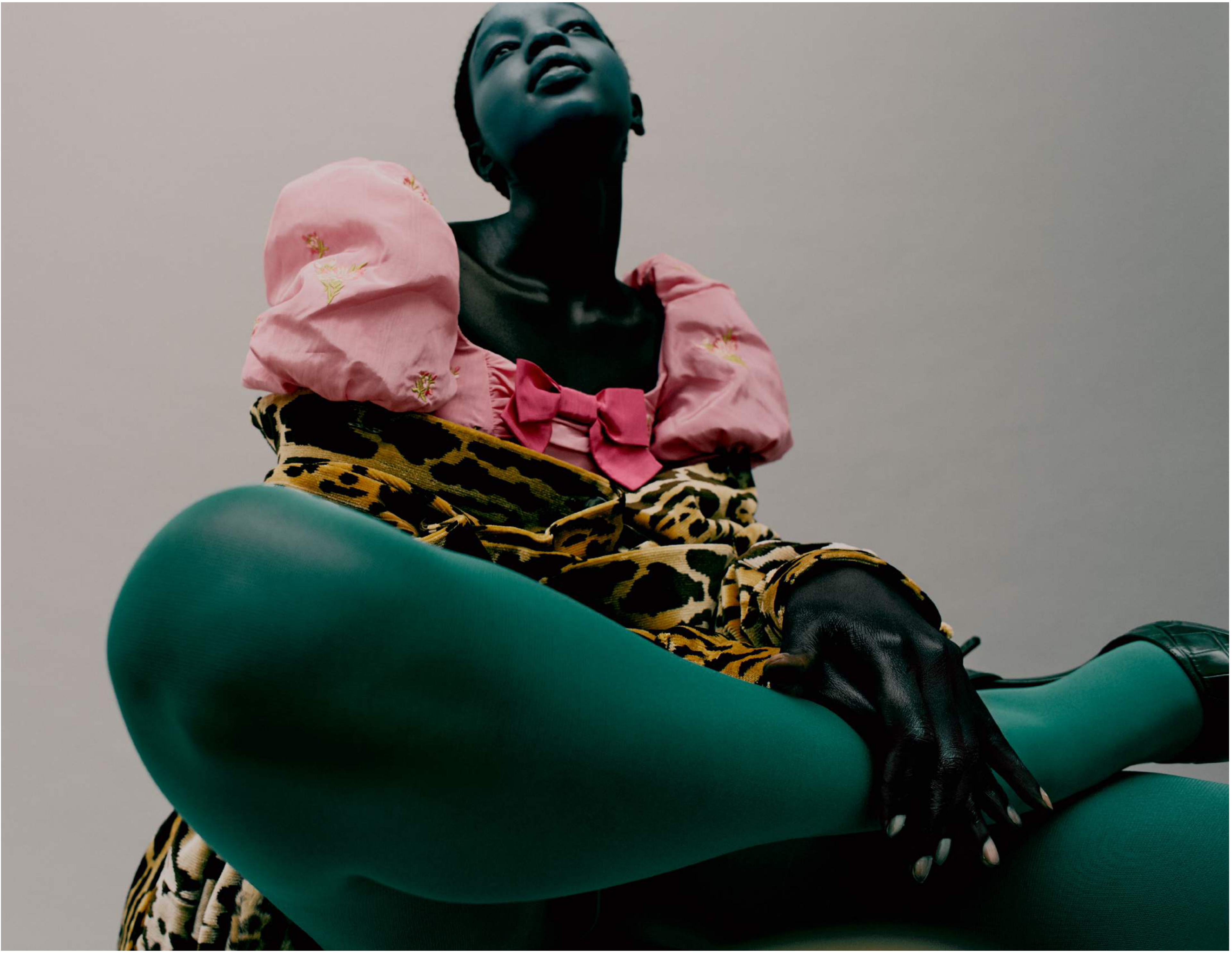
balenciaga
balenciaga

Awour wears jacket by JW Anderson,
hat by Marc Jacobs,
glasses by Louis Vuitton,
tights by Ibkamarastudios,
and heels by Manolo Blahnik.

Momo wears shirt and shoes
by Dries Van Noten,
layered jackets from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello
and Bluemarble,
trousers by Moschino,
belts by Ibkamarastudios
and Moschino,
and tie by Alyx Studio.

This page:
Cheikh wears shirt, tie, overshirt,
trousers and shoes by Dior Men,
hat by Gucci, and gloves by Paula Rowan.

Opposite page:
Sebrina wears jacket by Chanel
and shirt and tie by Louis Vuitton.



Akuol wears top by Moschino,
jacket by Miu Miu,
and tights and shoes by Ibkamarastudios.

Awour wears shirt,
blazer and skirt by Dior,
white shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
and hat by Maison Michel.

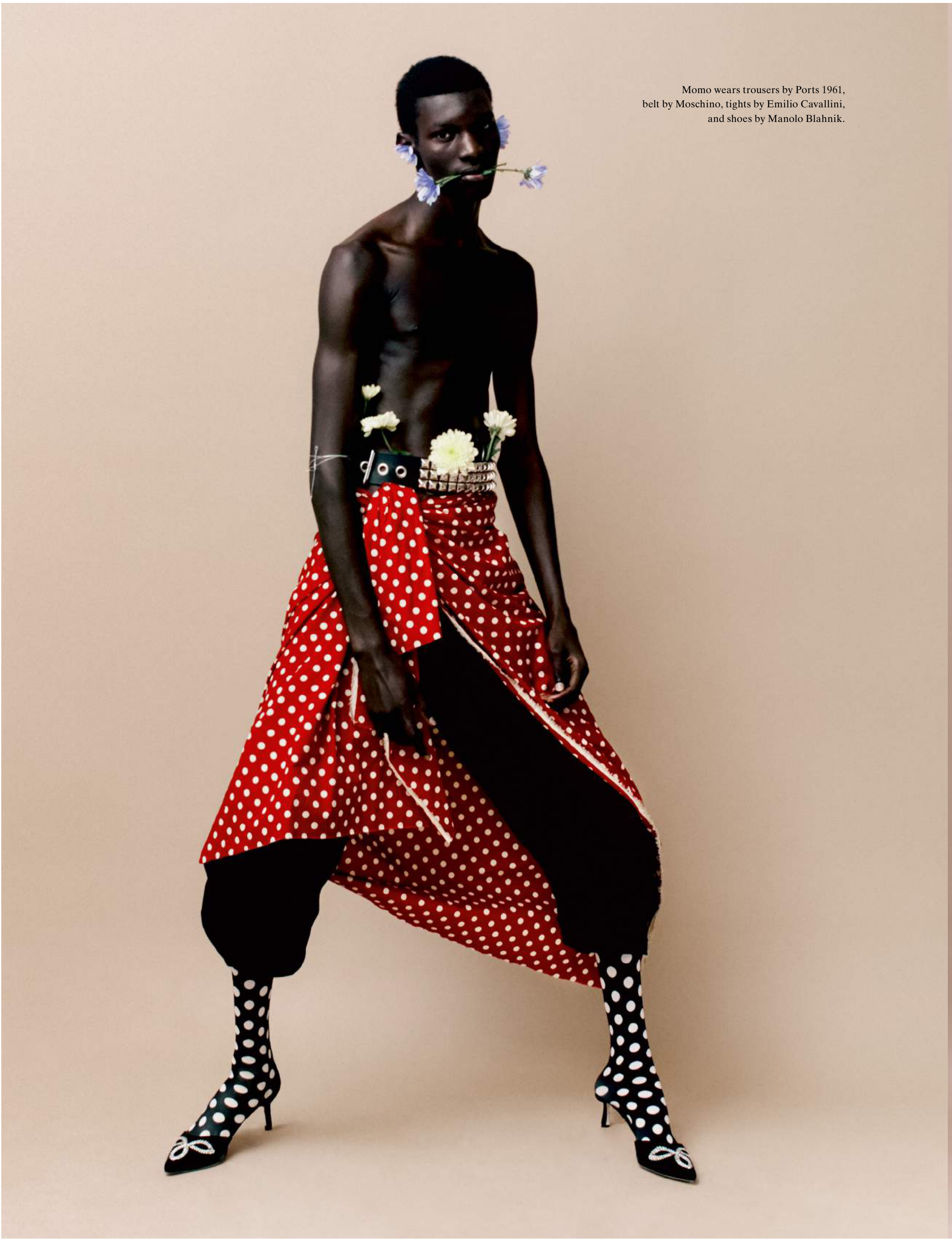
Awour wears dress by Ibkamarastudios
in collaboration with Fredrik Tjærandsen,
shirts by Gucci and Louis Vuitton,
tights and headpiece by Ibkamarastudios,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.

Binta wears shirt by Alyx Studio,
skirt by Marine Serre,
hat by Maison Michel,
and coat and cape by Ethan Mullings.

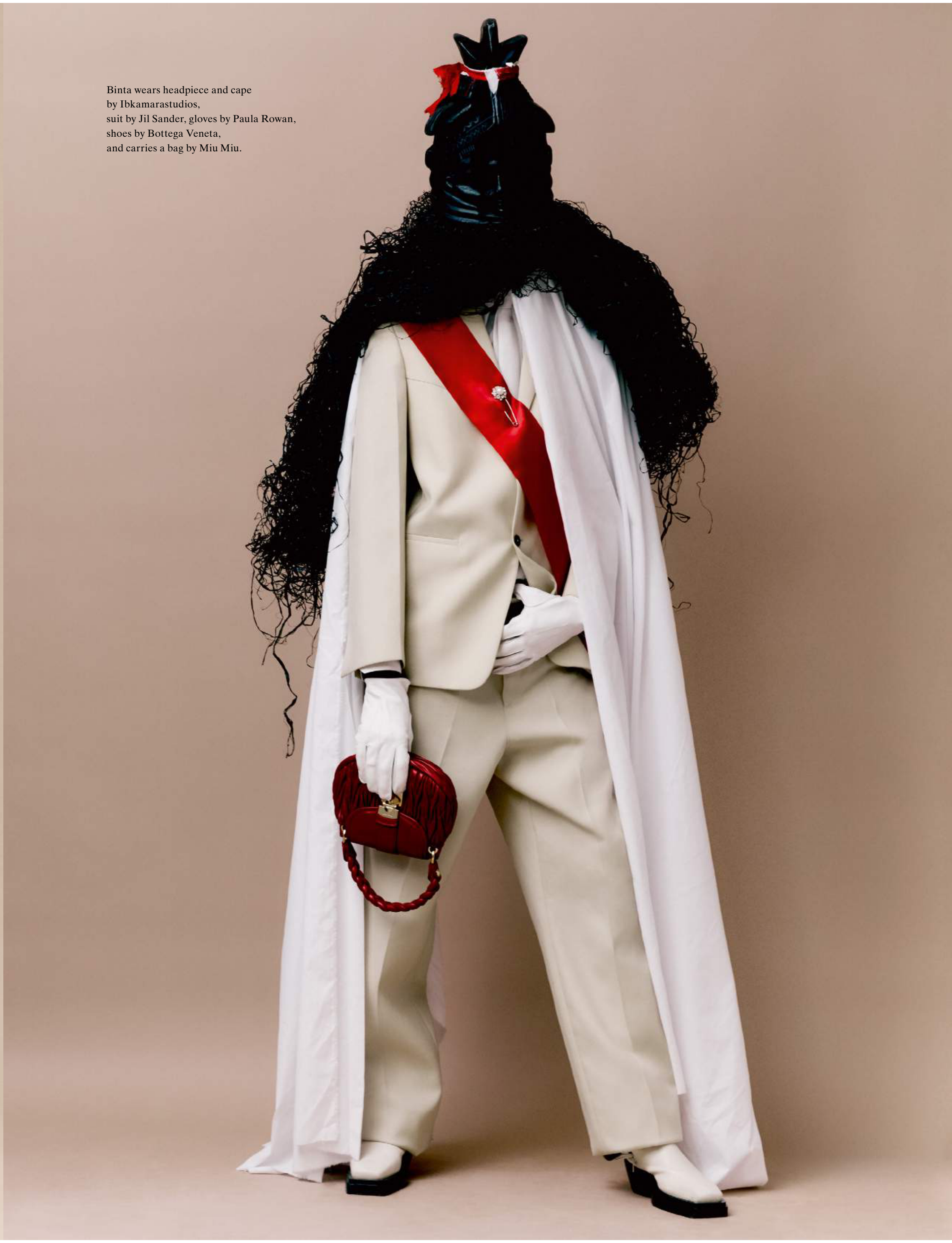
King wears hat by Gucci,
ties by Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shoes by Christian Louboutin,
and carries a briefcase by Ibkamarastudios.

Awour wears hat by Gucci, dress by Miu Miu,
gloves by Marc Jacobs,
and earrings by Giovanni Raspini.

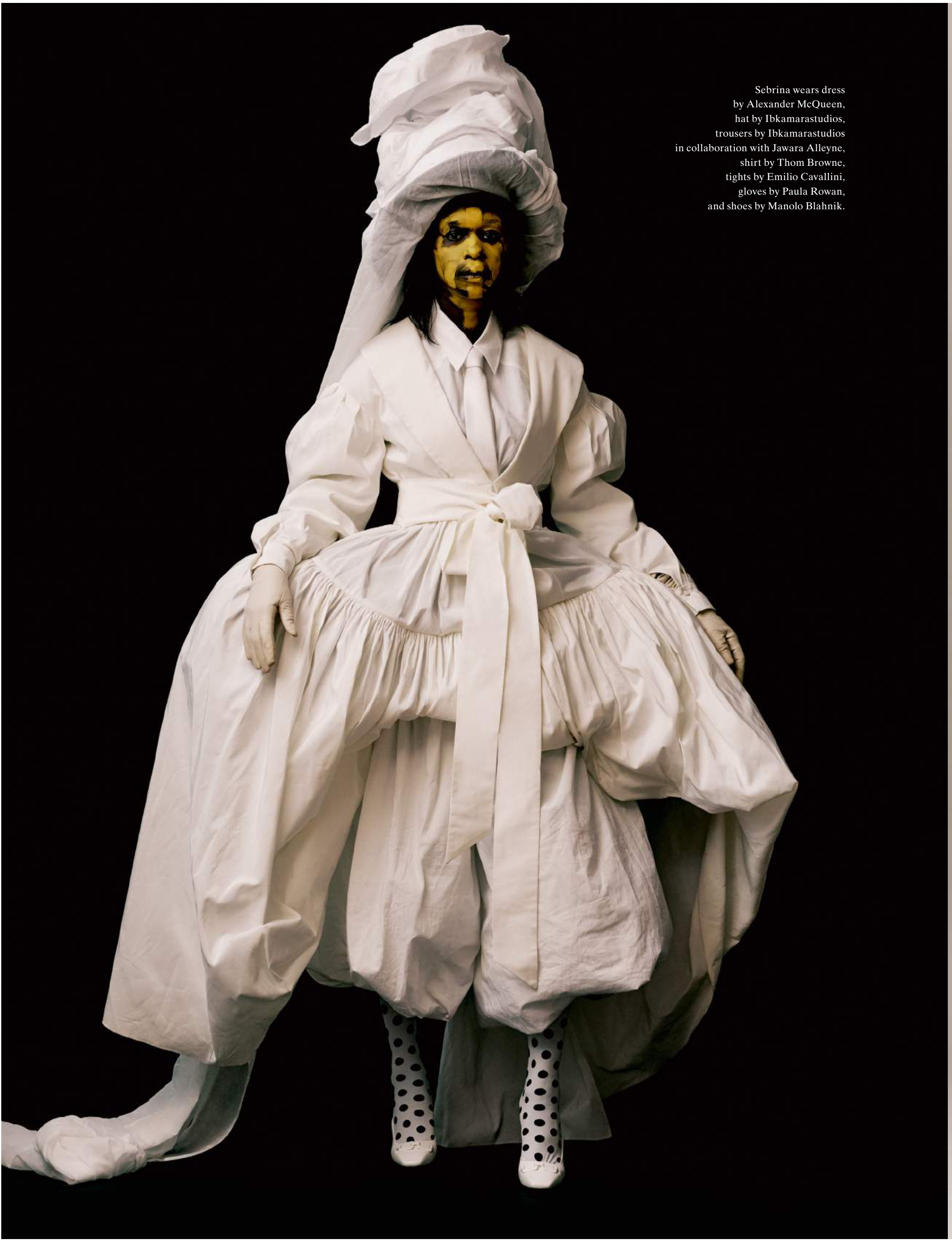
Sebrina wears dress by Balenciaga,
top by João Machado,
shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



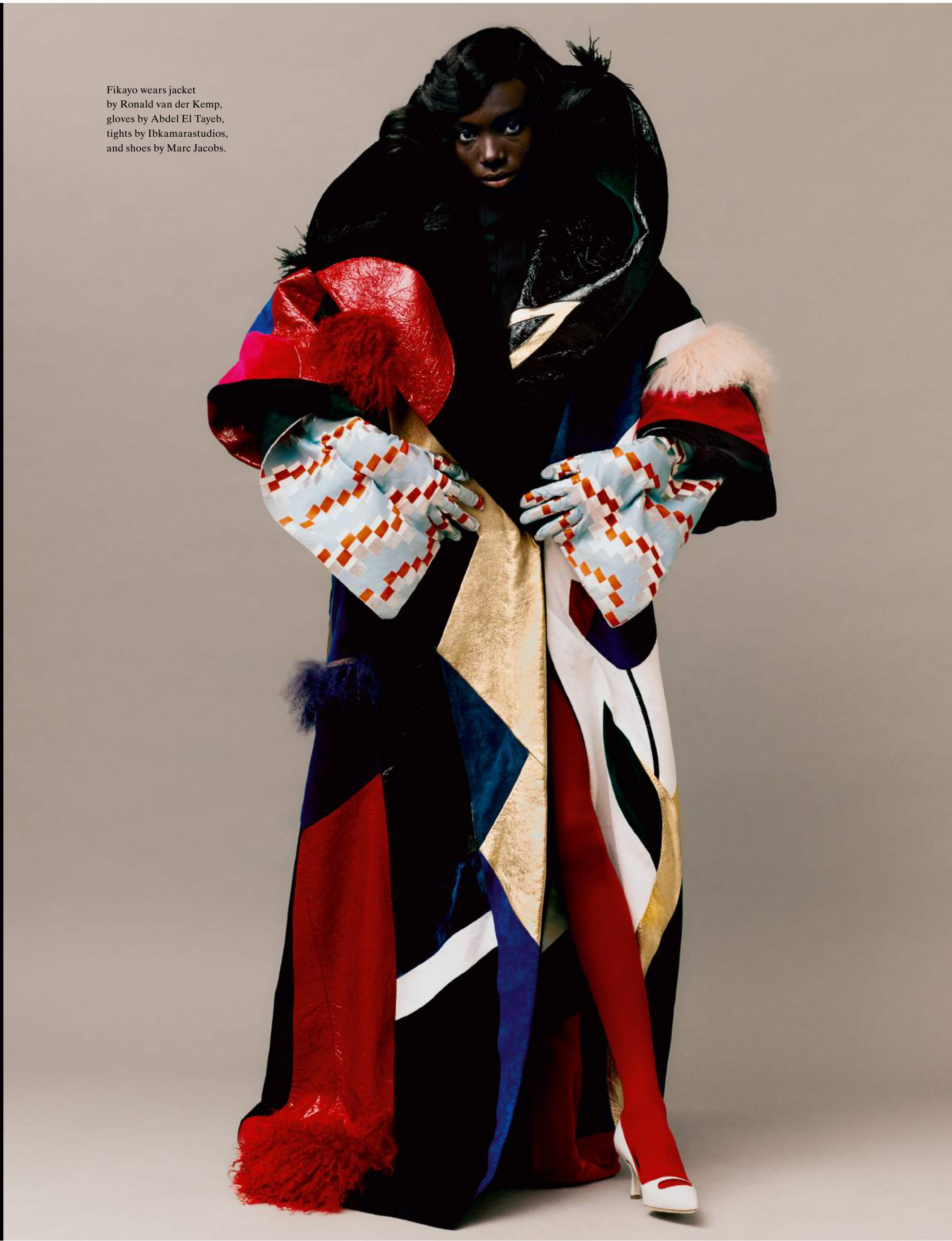
Momo wears trousers by Ports 1961,
belt by Moschino, tights by Emilio Cavallini,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



Binta wears headpiece and cape
by Ibkamarastudios,
suit by Jil Sander, gloves by Paula Rowan,
shoes by Bottega Veneta,
and carries a bag by Miu Miu.

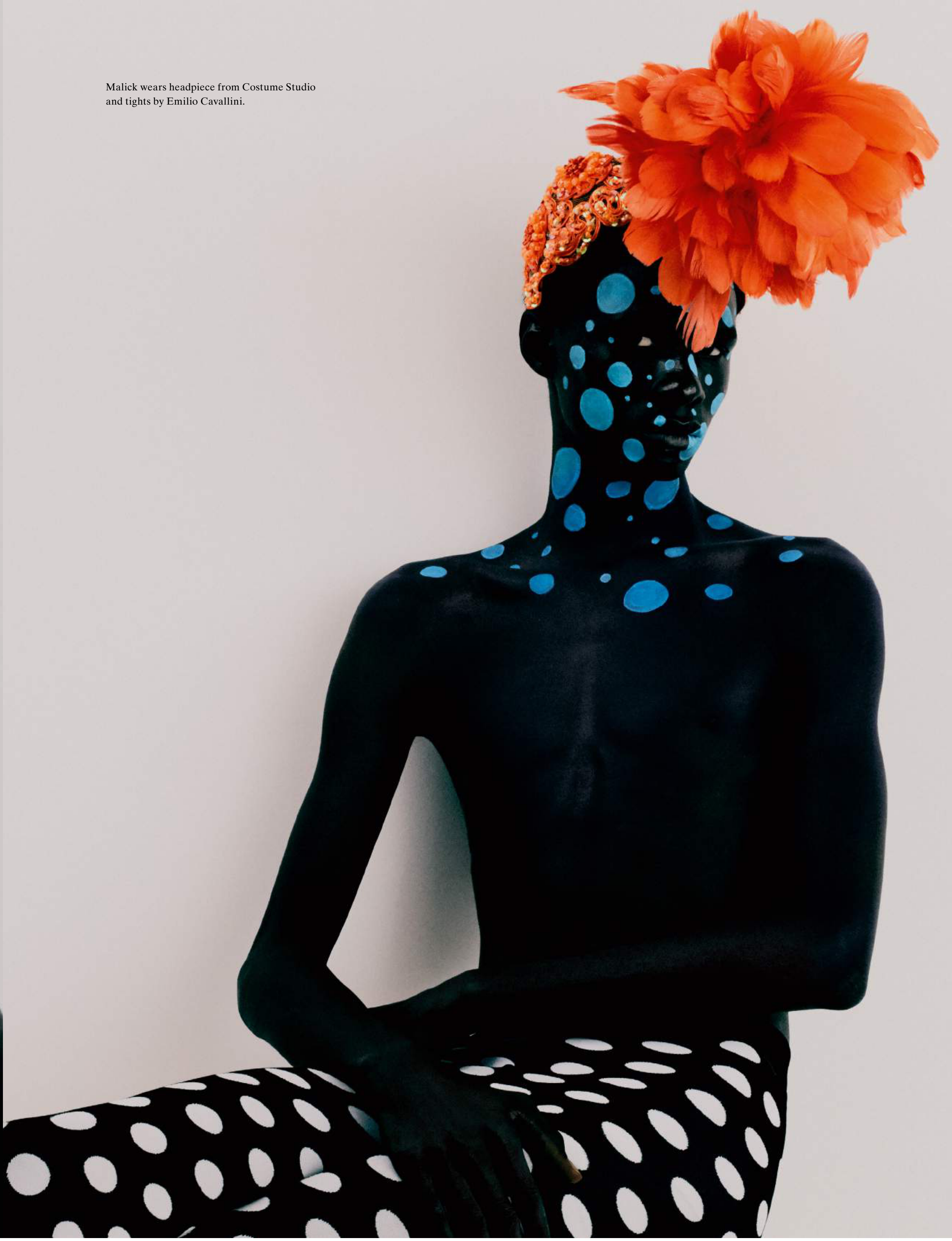


Sebrina wears dress
by Alexander McQueen,
hat by Ibkamarastudios,
trousers by Ibkamarastudios
in collaboration with Jawara Alleyne,
shirt by Thom Browne,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.

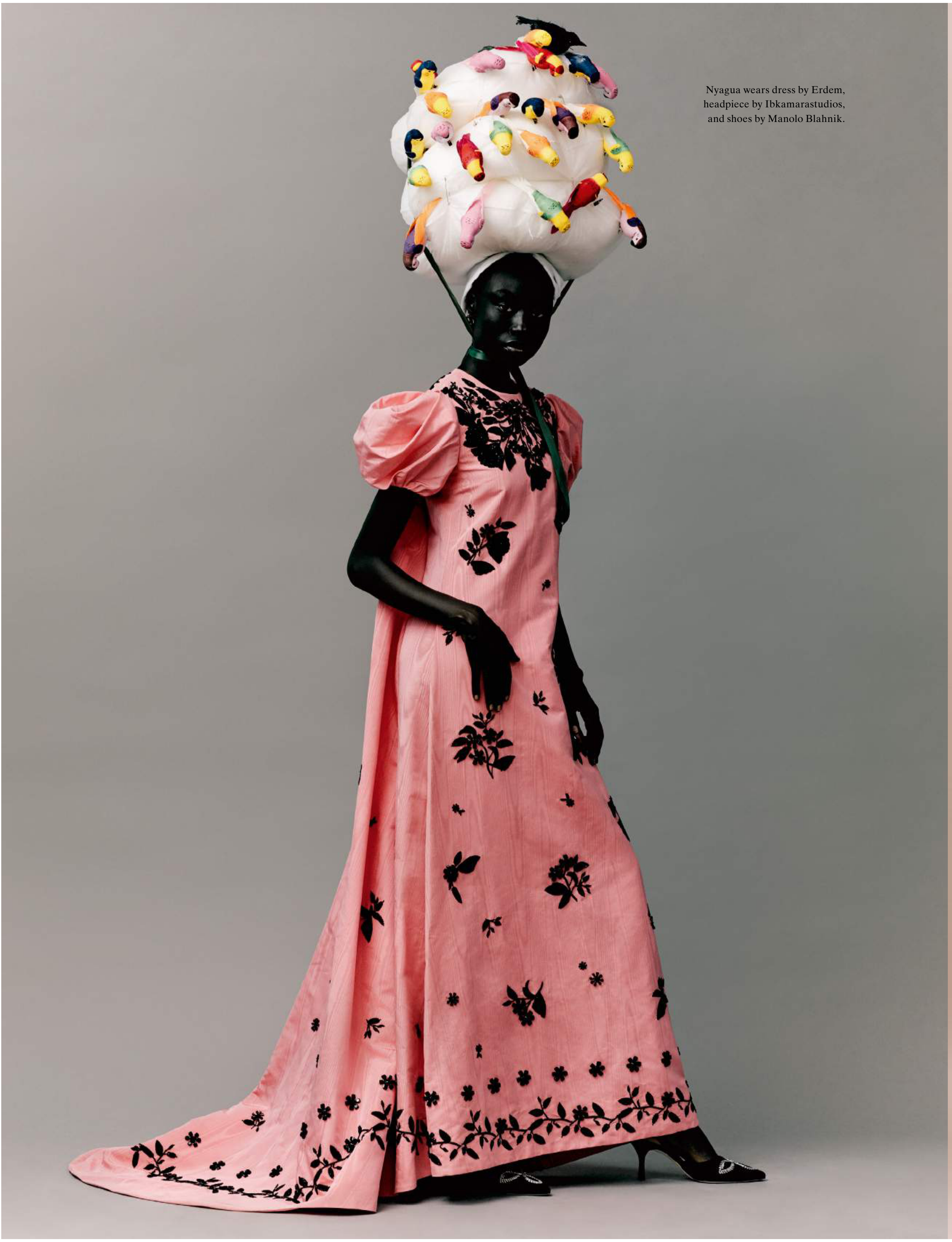


Fikayo wears jacket
by Ronald van der Kemp,
gloves by Abdel El Tayeb,
tights by Ibkamarastudios,
and shoes by Marc Jacobs.

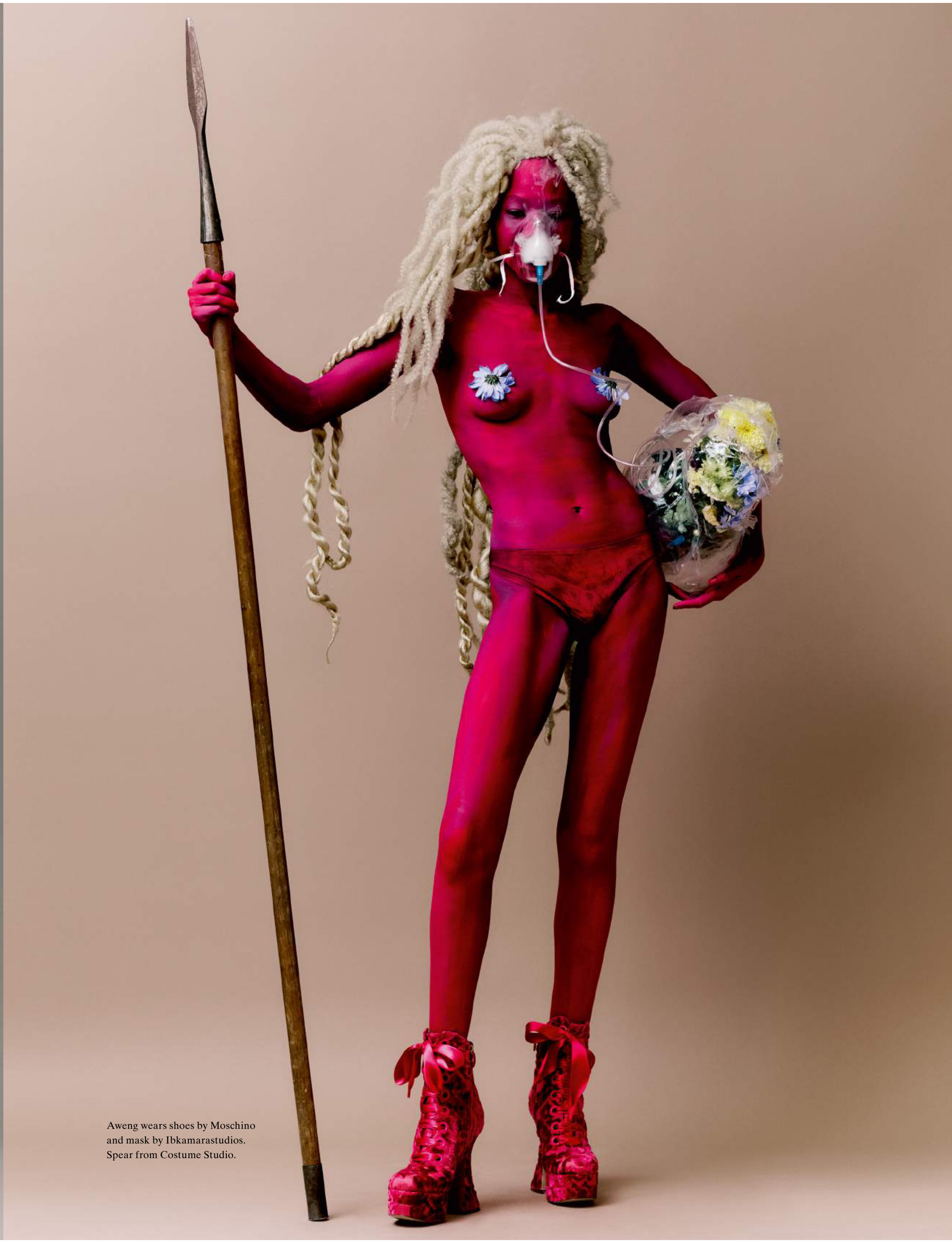
Omar wears headpiece from Costume Studio.



Malick wears headpiece from Costume Studio
and tights by Emilio Cavallini.



Nyagua wears dress by Erdem,
headpiece by Ibkamarastudios,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.

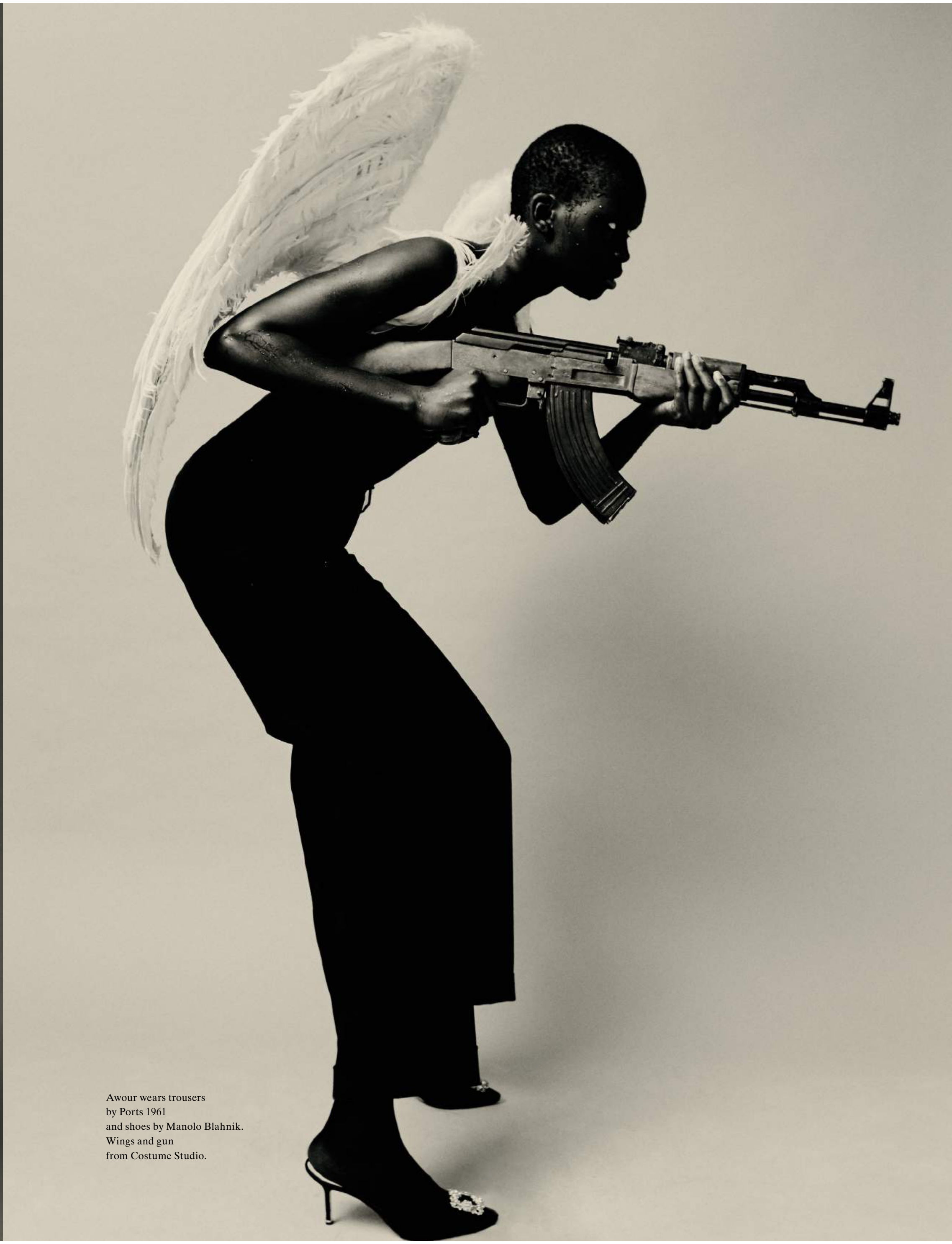


Aweng wears shoes by Moschino
and mask by Ibkamarastudios.
Spear from Costume Studio.

Ajak wears cape by Ibkamarastudios.

Ajak wears suit by Balenciaga,
shirt by Jegor Pister,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
cape by Ibkamarastudios,
shoes by Emilia Wickstead,
and carries a bag by Giorgio Armani.

Niko wears shoes by Fendi,
belt by Prada,
trousers by Boss,
earrings by Pebble London,
and wings from Costume Studio.

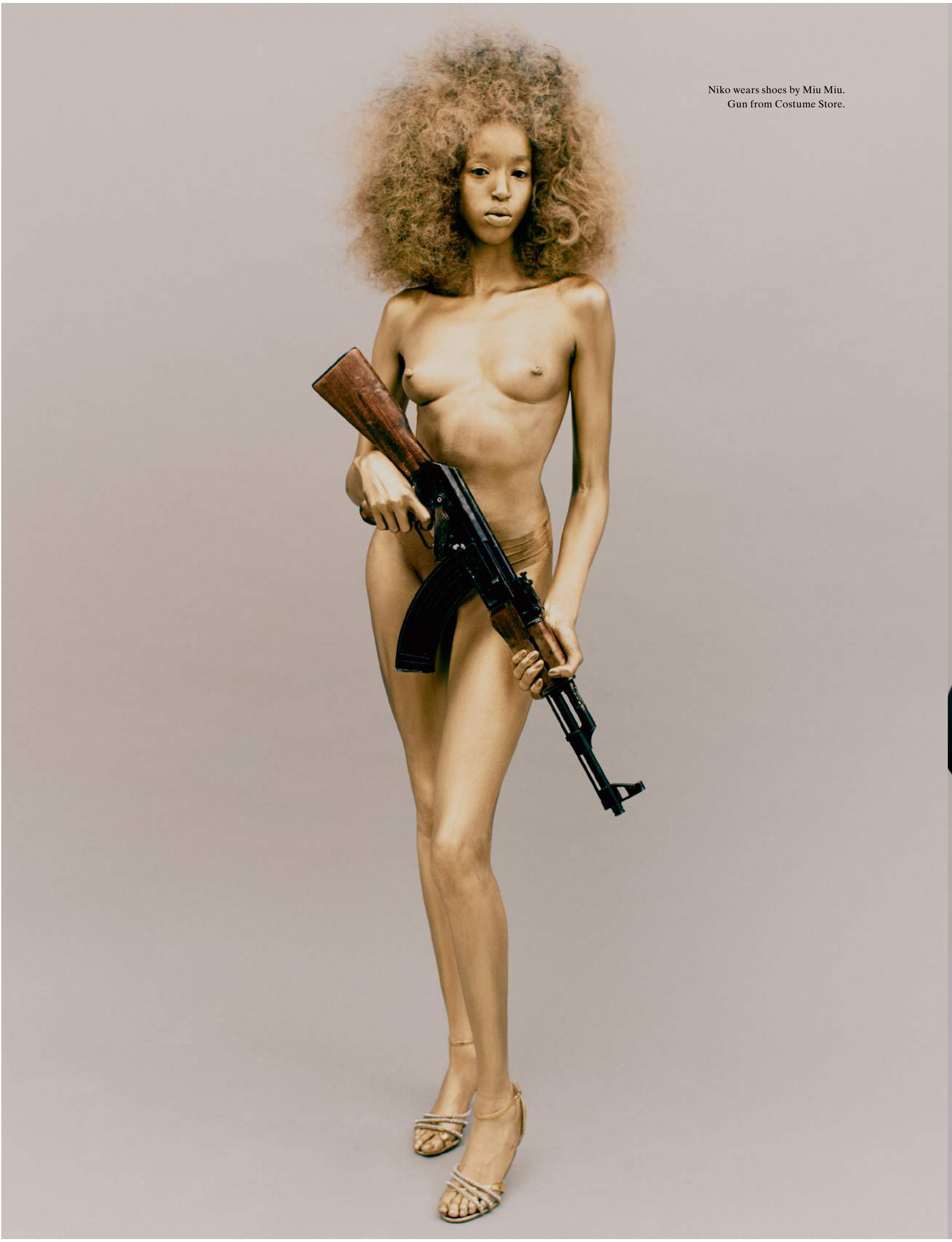


Awour wears trousers
by Ports 1961
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.
Wings and gun
from Costume Studio.

Nyarach wears shirt by Dries Van Noten.

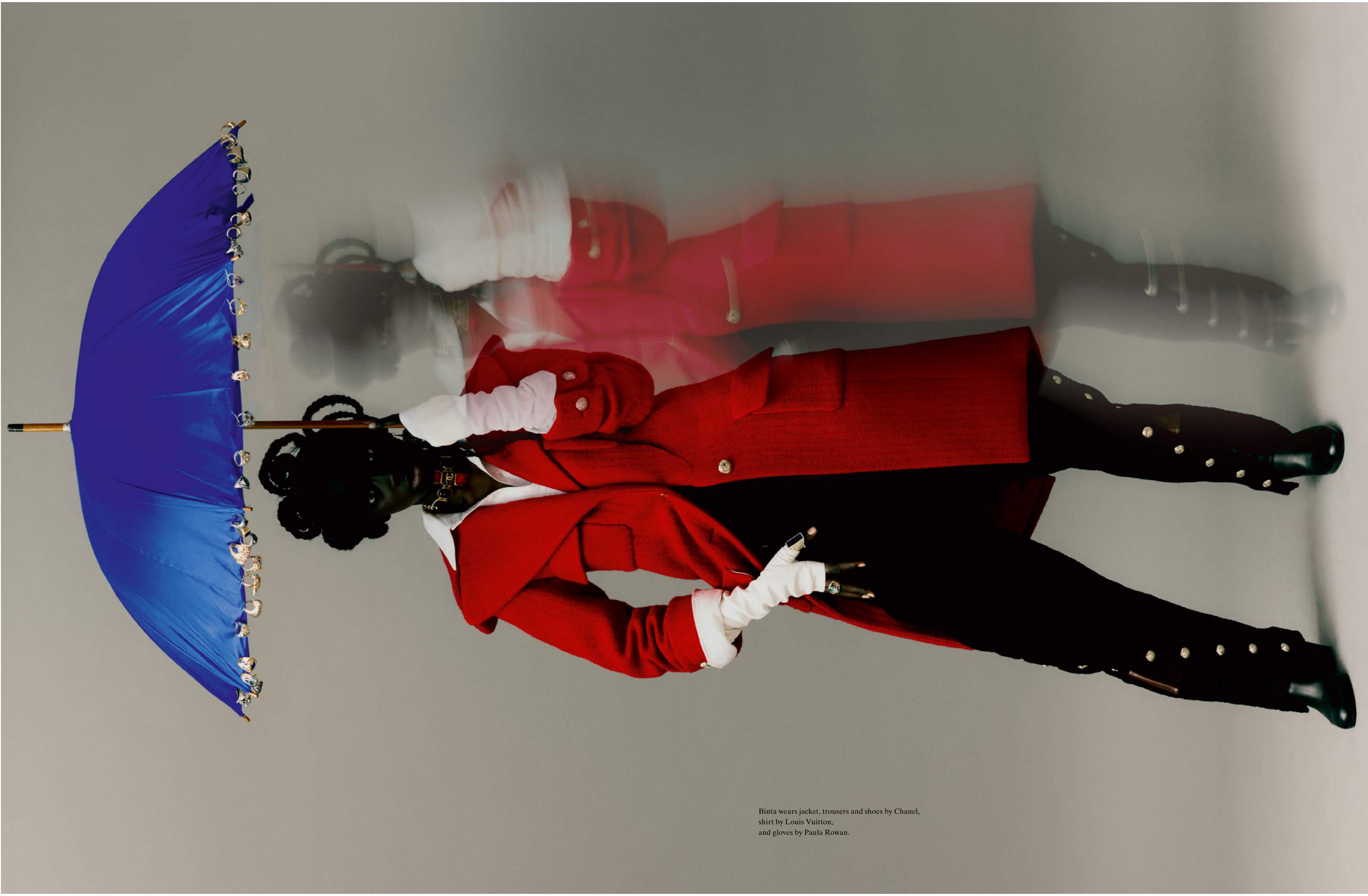
This page:
King wears full look by Gucci,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
gas mask by Ibkamarastudios,
and carries a briefcase
by Ibkamarastudios.

Opposite page:
Omar and King wear hats
by Lock and Co. Hatters
and shoes by Christian Louboutin.
Omar wears blazer
and trousers by Prada,
and shirt and tie
by Ibkamarastudios.
King wears blazer
and trousers by Boss,
shirt by Dior Men,
and tie by Alyx Studio.



Niko wears shoes by Miu Miu.
Gun from Costume Store.

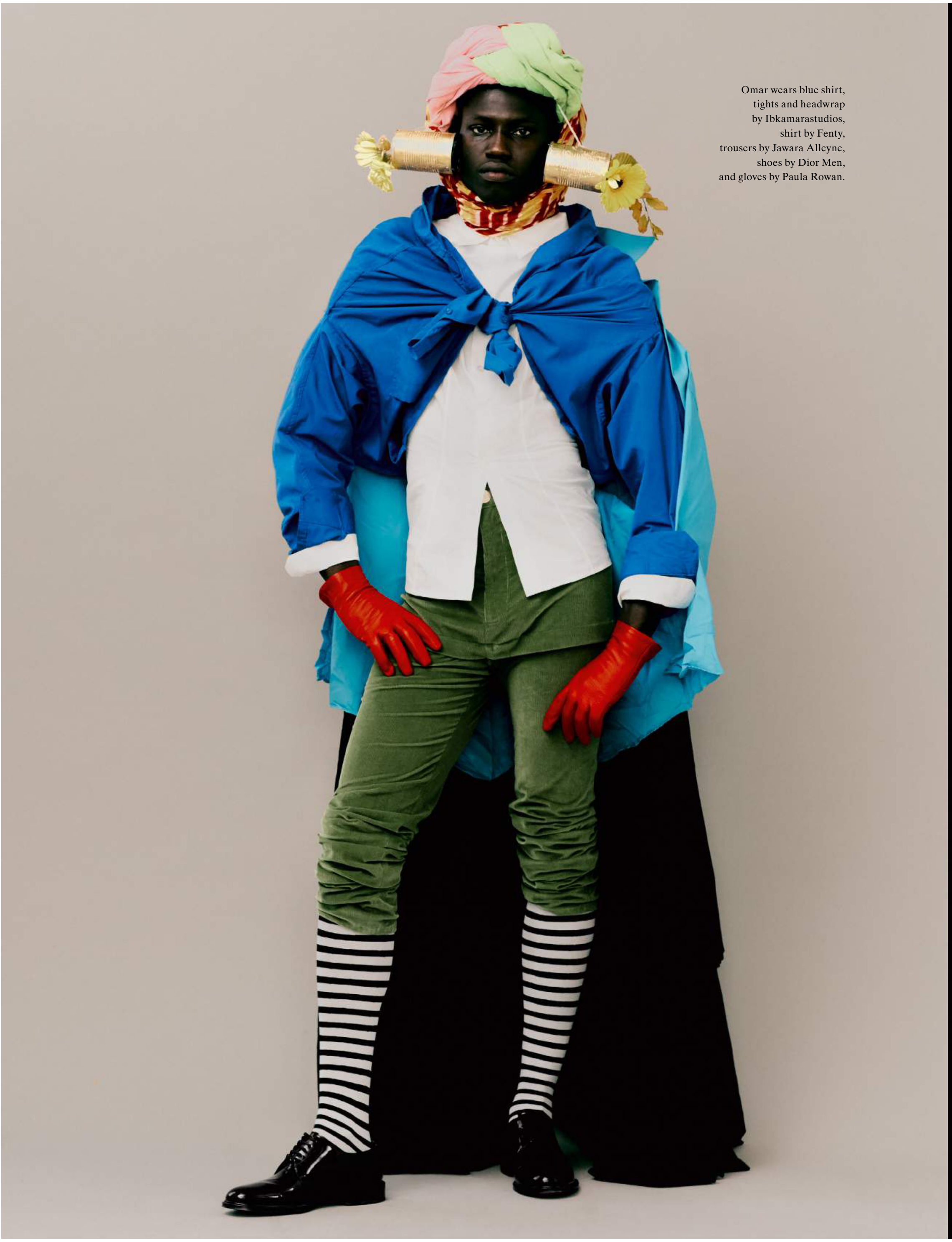
Omar wears armour belt
created by Timothy Gibbons
in collaboration
with Ibkamarastudios,
rings and necklaces
by Ibkamarastudios,
and bracelets and necklaces
by Giovanni Raspini.



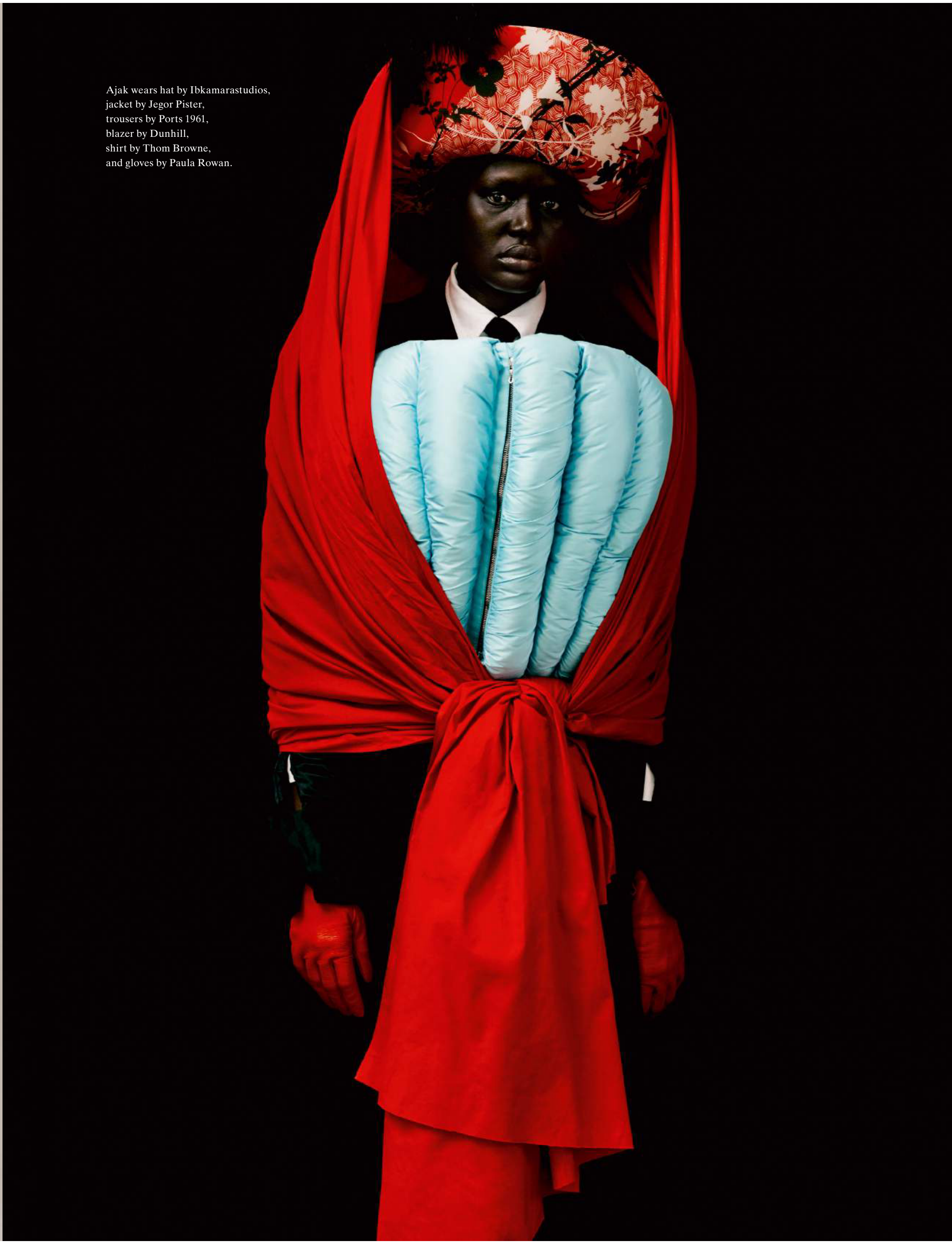
Binta wears jacket, trousers and shoes by Chanel,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
and gloves by Paula Rowan.

Malick wears
striped shirt by Lanvin,
white shirt and fur jacket
by Louis Vuitton,
and bow by Ibkamarastudios.

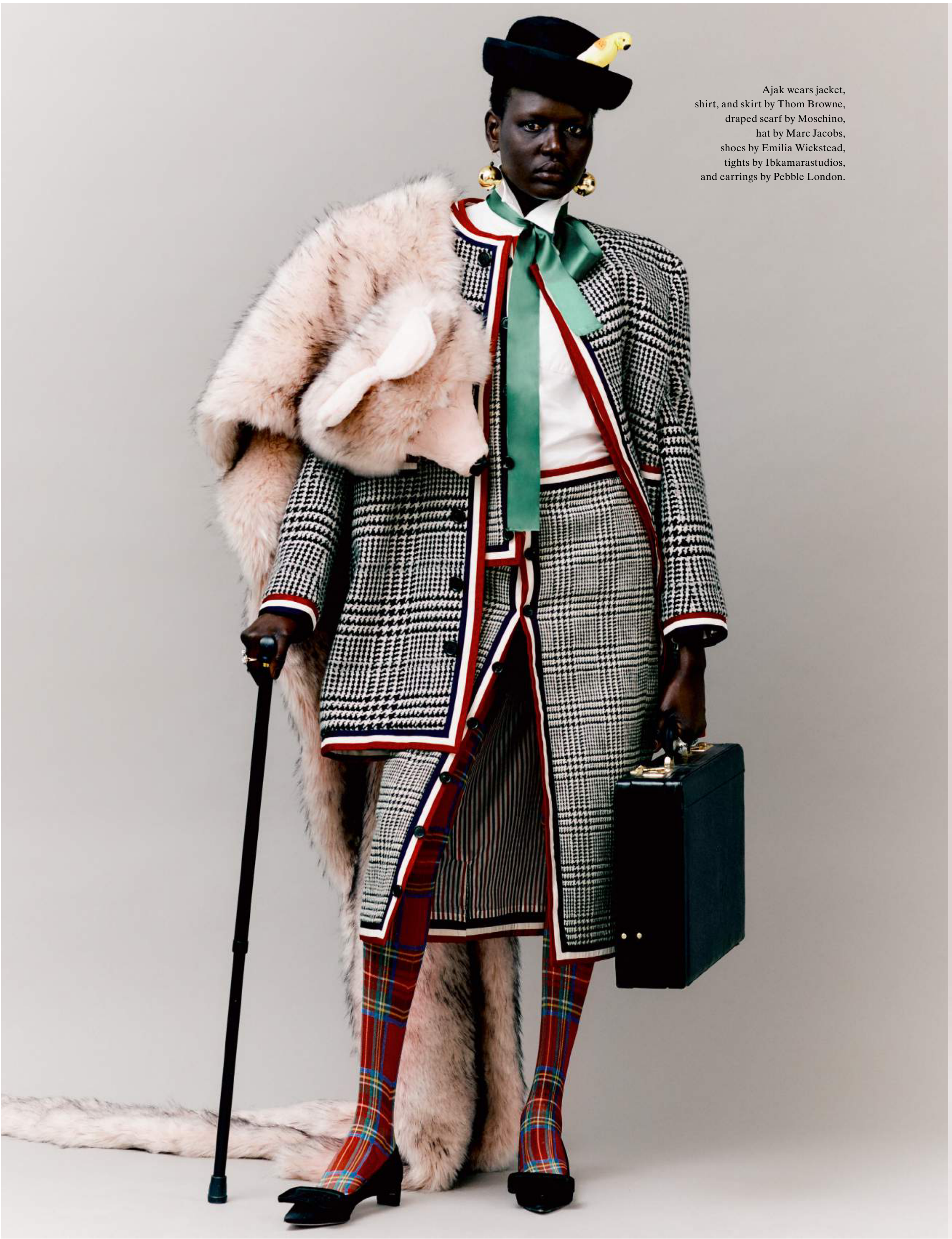
Niko and Akuol
in floral creation
by Ibkamarastudios.



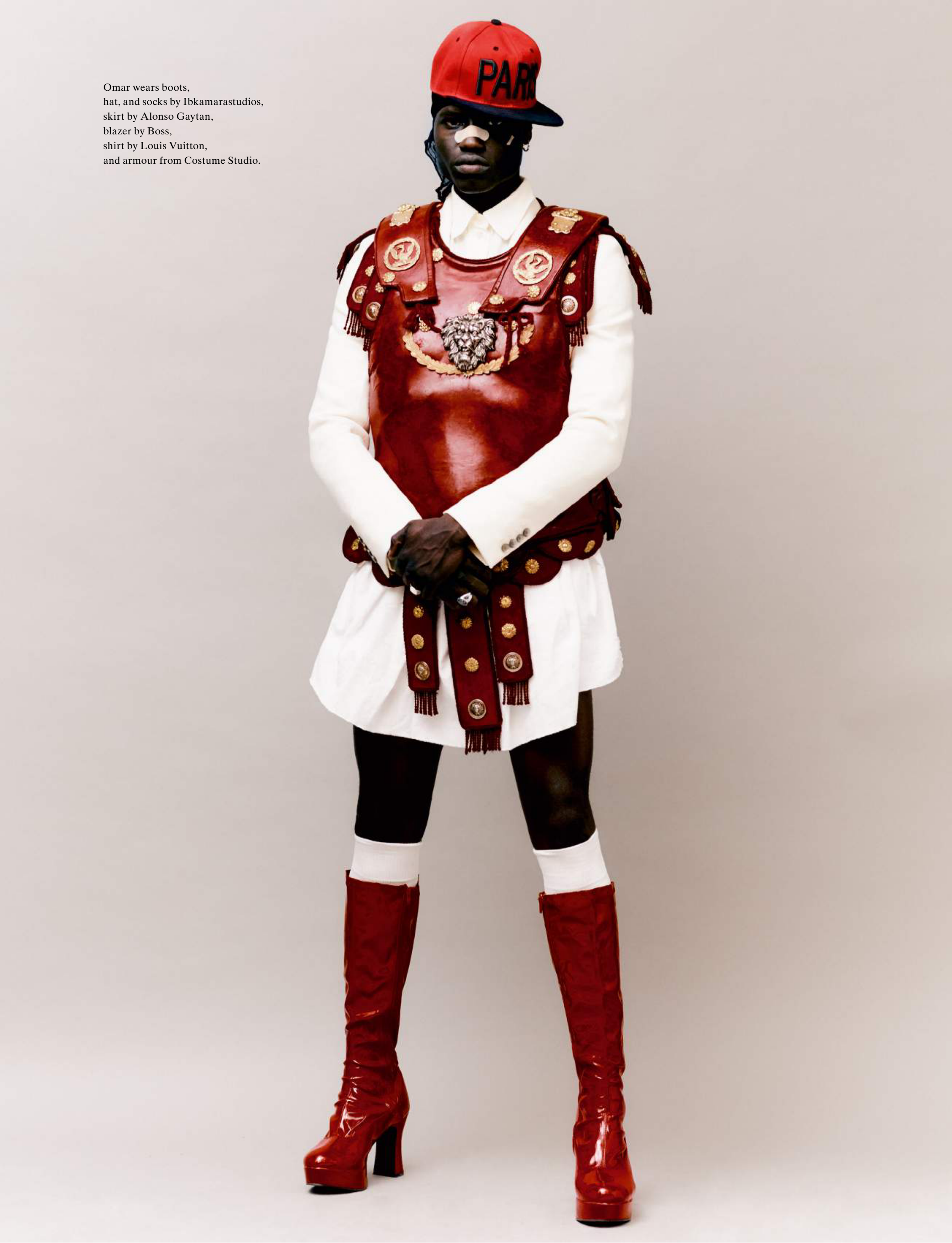
Omar wears blue shirt,
tights and headwrap
by Ibkamarastudios,
shirt by Fenty,
trousers by Jawara Alleyne,
shoes by Dior Men,
and gloves by Paula Rowan.



Ajak wears hat by Ibkamarastudios,
jacket by Jegor Pister,
trousers by Ports 1961,
blazer by Dunhill,
shirt by Thom Browne,
and gloves by Paula Rowan.



Ajak wears jacket,
shirt, and skirt by Thom Browne,
draped scarf by Moschino,
hat by Marc Jacobs,
shoes by Emilia Wickstead,
tights by Ibkamarastudios,
and earrings by Pebble London.



Omar wears boots,
hat, and socks by Ibkamarastudios,
skirt by Alonso Gaytan,
blazer by Boss,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
and armour from Costume Studio.

Binta wears skirt and mesh top by Prada
and hat by Ibkamarastudios.
Nurse's top, stylist's own.

Aweng wears earrings by Jil Sander,
and Pebble London,
shirt by Alyx Studio,
and blazer from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.

Jefferson wears shirt,
tie, and hat by Ibkamarastudios,
blazer from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello,
and sunglasses by Balenciaga.

Emmanuelle wears shirt
by Alyx Studio,
trousers by Jil Sander,
latex apron and headpiece
by Ethan Mullings,
shoes by Christian Louboutin
and Dries Van Noten,
and gloves by Ibkamarastudios.

This page:
Omar wears top by Richard Quinn,
trousers by Ibkamarastudios
in collaboration with Jawara Alleyne,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
and shoes by Gucci.

Opposite page:
Ottawa wears blazer by Dunhill
and shirt by Ibkamarastudios.

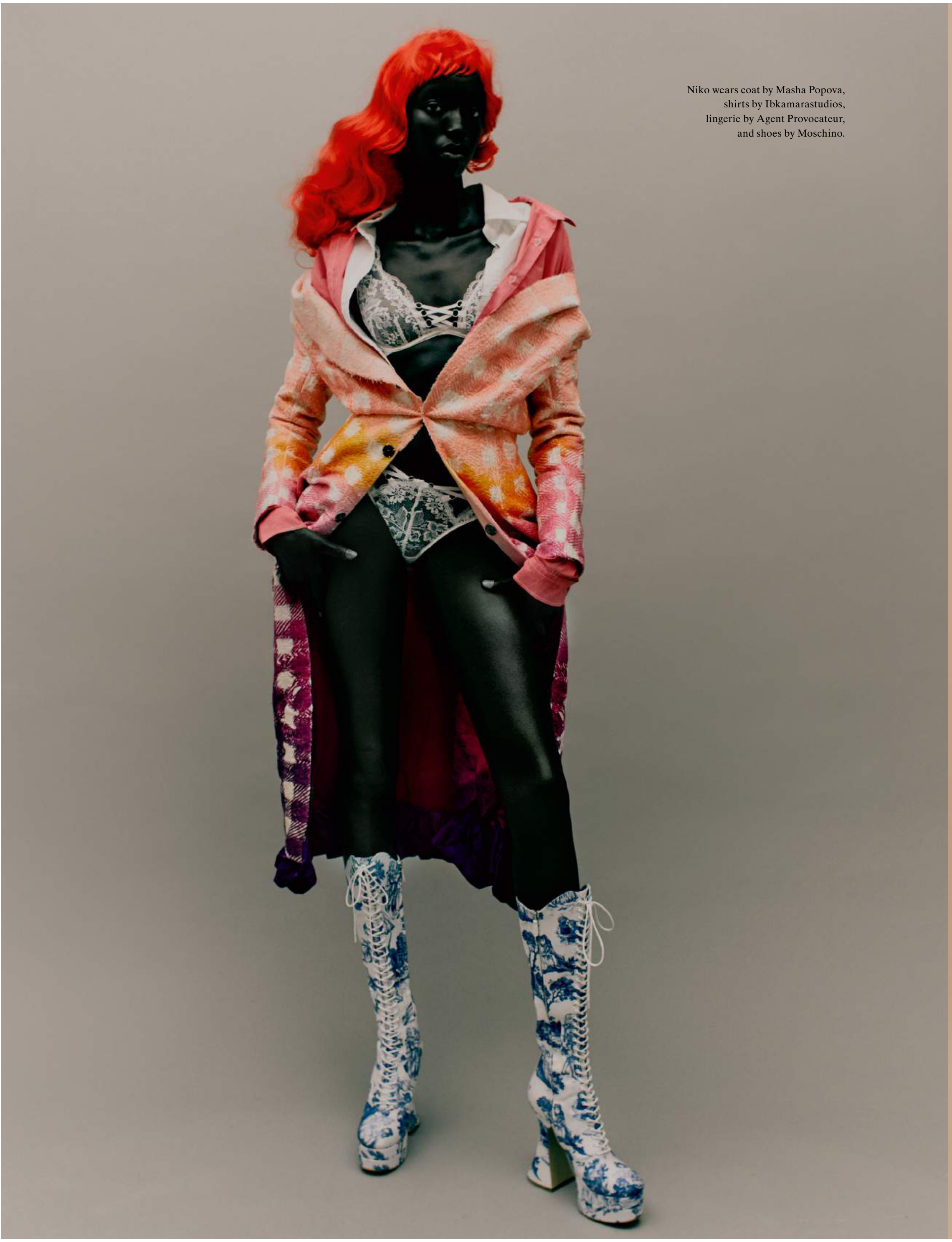
ER TOO LATE
YOMIHIRO KONO
HEAD PROP
Personal Projects: Far Far Rockaway Simon Eeles
Personal Projects: Australiana Simon Eeles

King wears jacket by Balenciaga,
hat and tie by Ibkamarastudios,
dress by Loewe,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
and gloves by Paula Rowan.
Shoes, stylist's own.

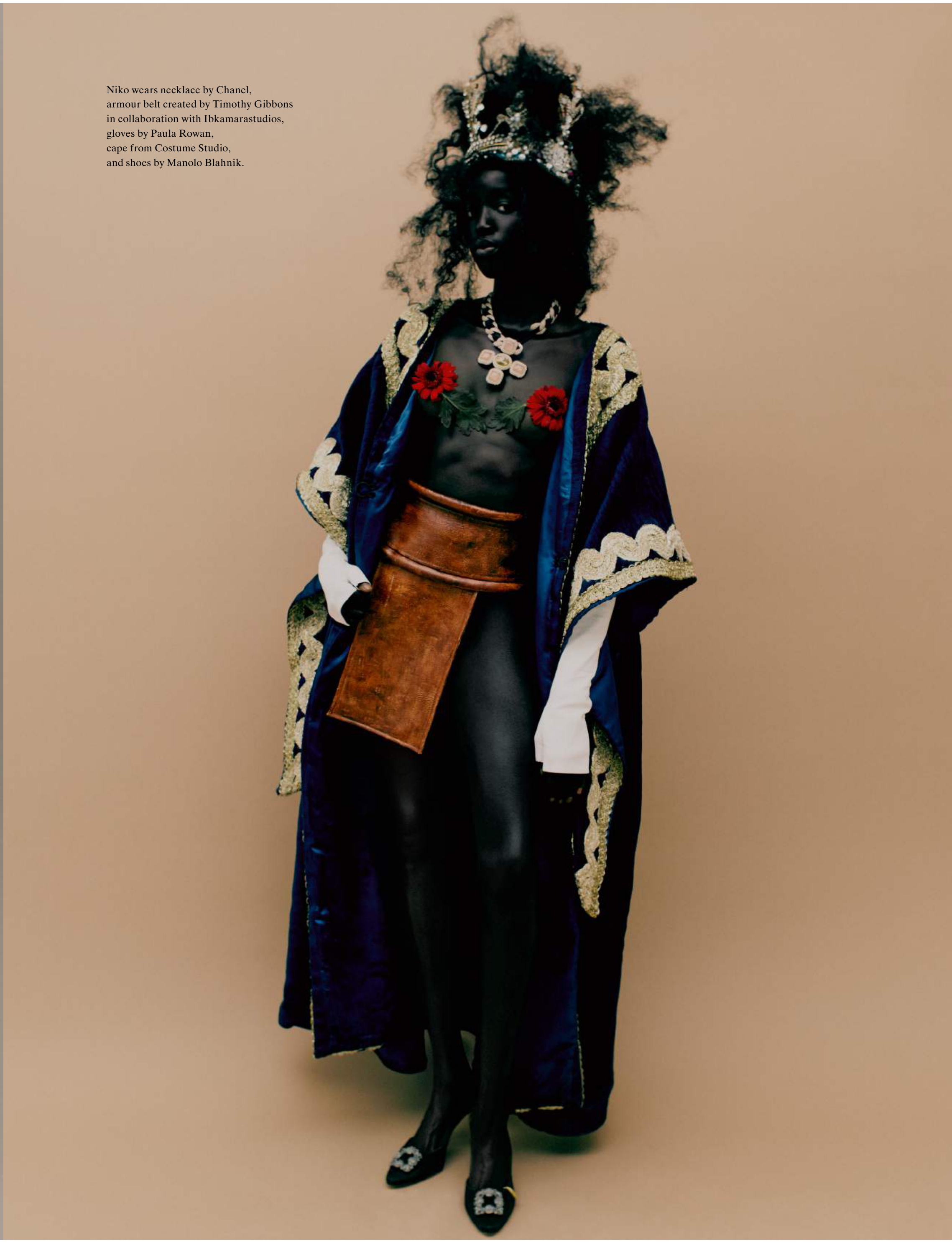
Aweng wears blazer by Blumarine,
dress by Halpern, shirt by Dior Men,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shoes by Marc Jacobs.

This page:
Cheikh wears full Comme des Garçons,
boots by Christian Louboutin,
and headpiece by Ibkamarastudios.

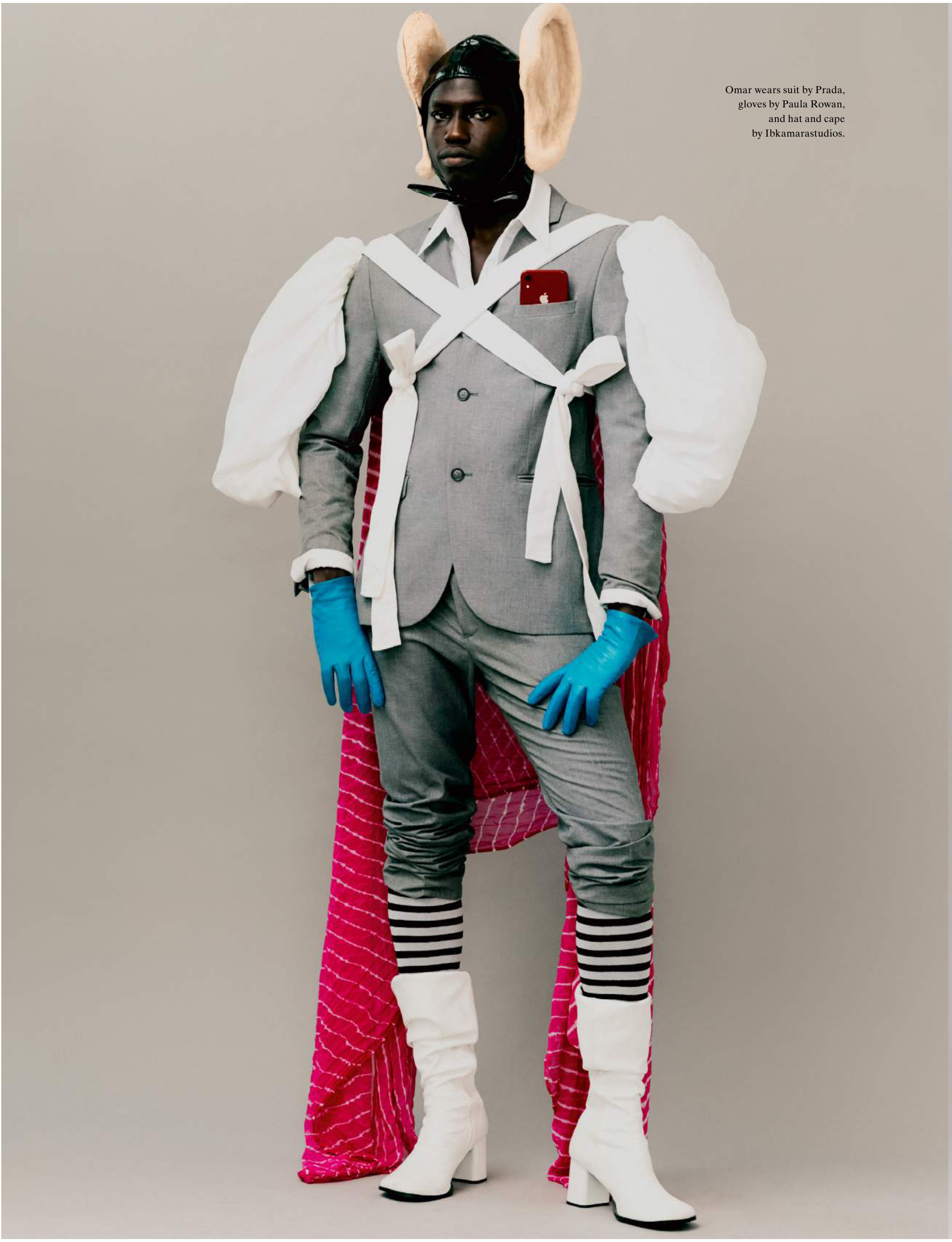
Opposite page:
Jefferson wears shirt
and jacket by Prada,
hat by Anthon Raimund,
and glasses by Balenciaga.



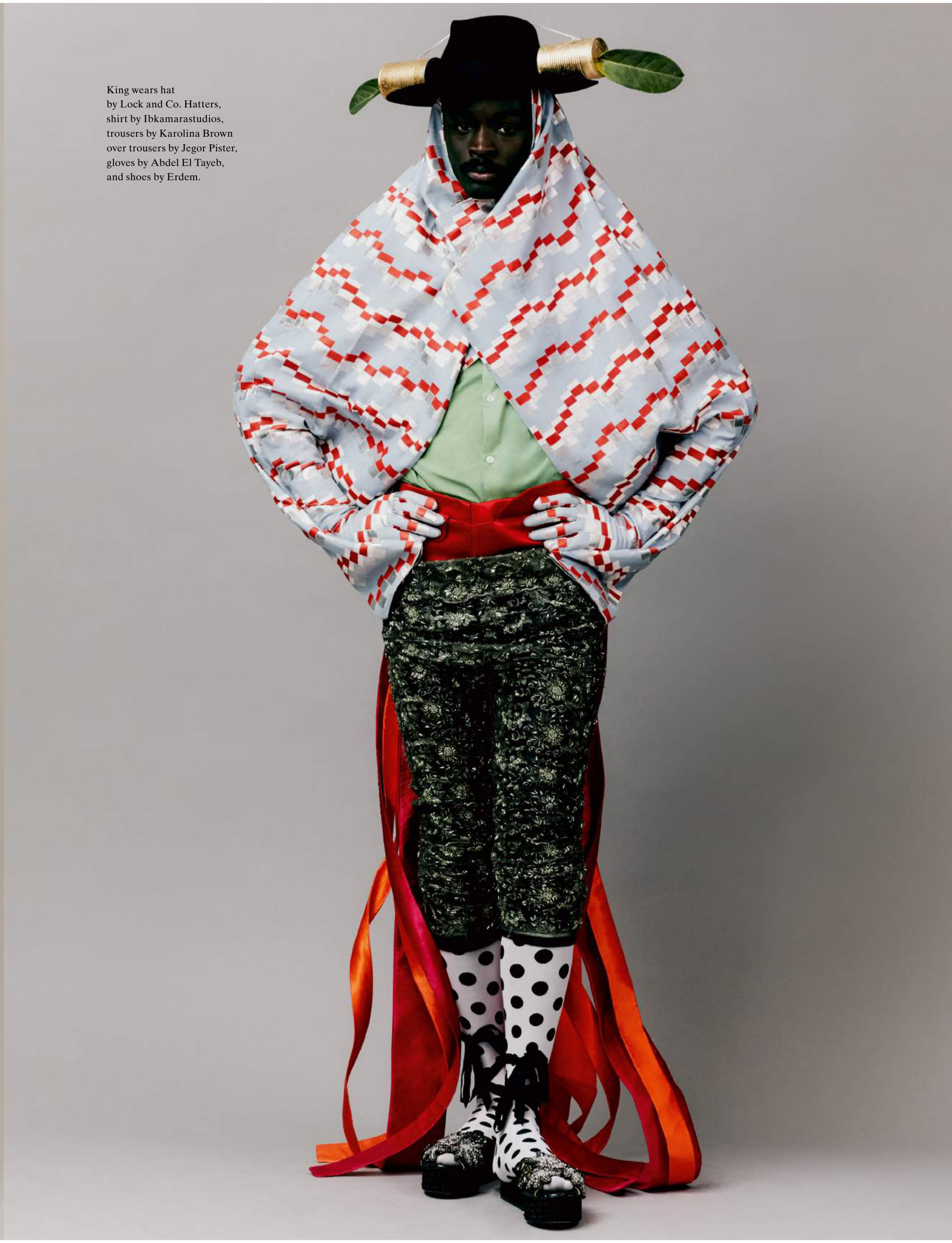
Niko wears coat by Masha Popova,
shirts by Ibkamarastudios,
lingerie by Agent Provocateur,
and shoes by Moschino.



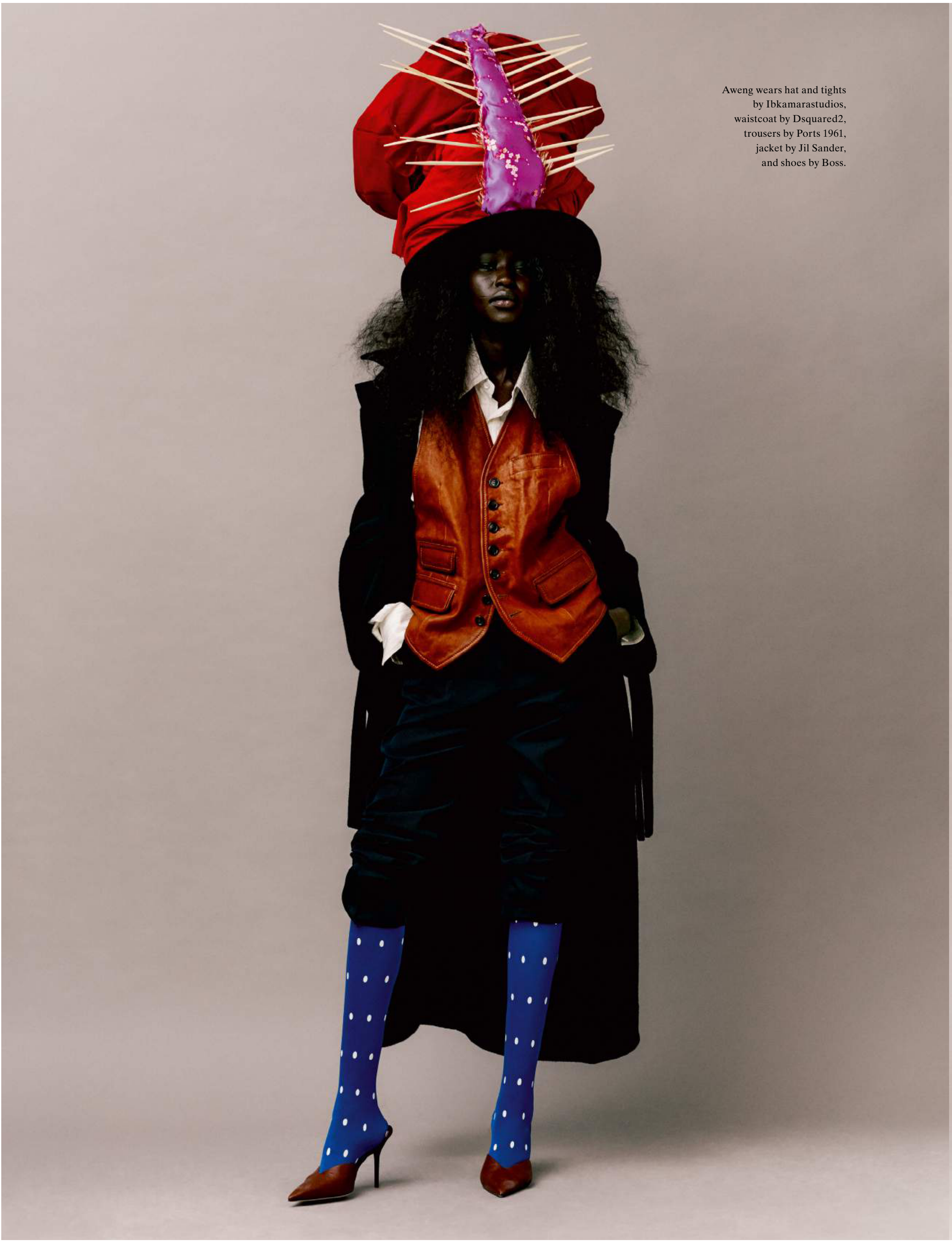
Niko wears necklace by Chanel,
armour belt created by Timothy Gibbons
in collaboration with Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
cape from Costume Studio,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



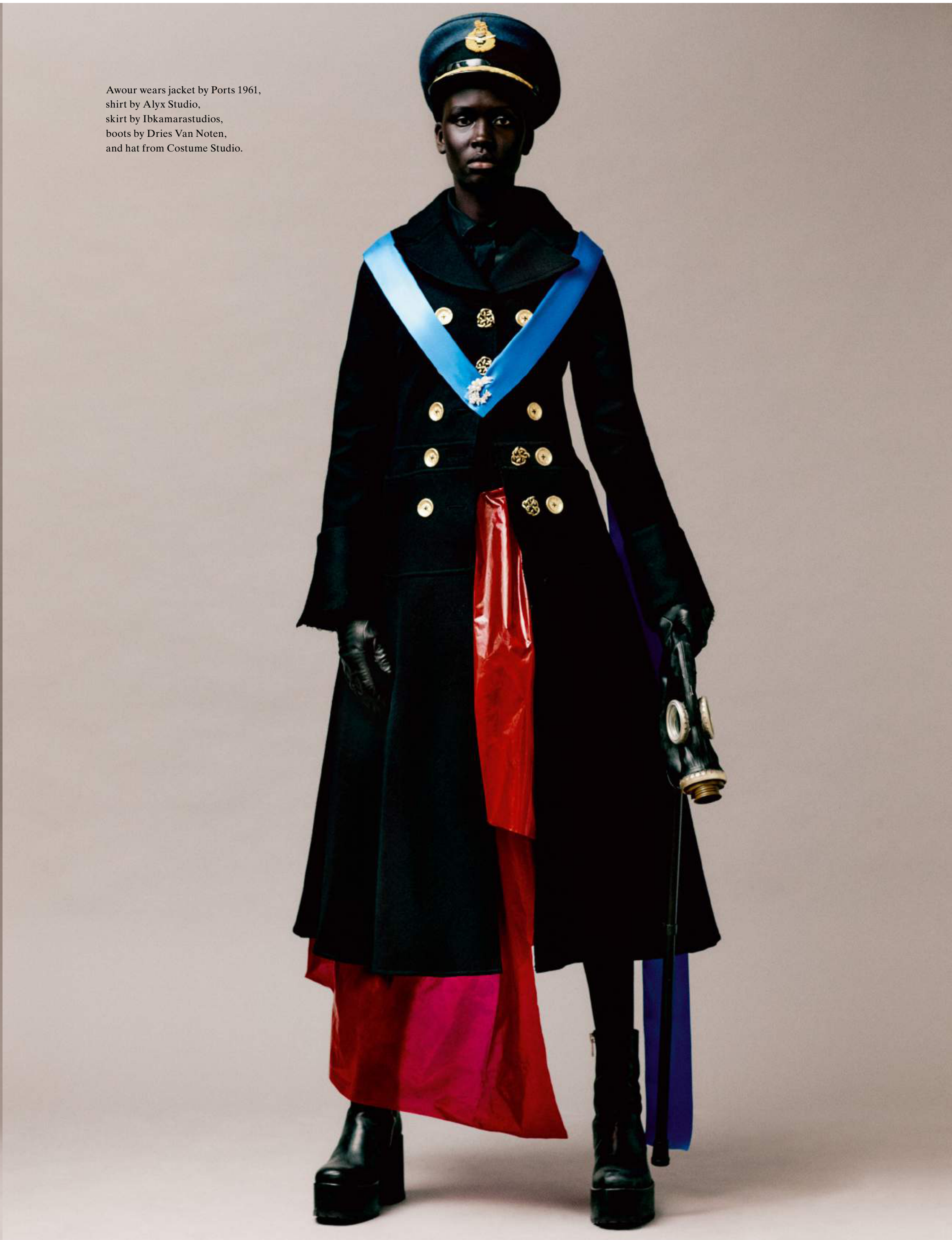
Omar wears suit by Prada,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and hat and cape
by Ibkamarastudios.



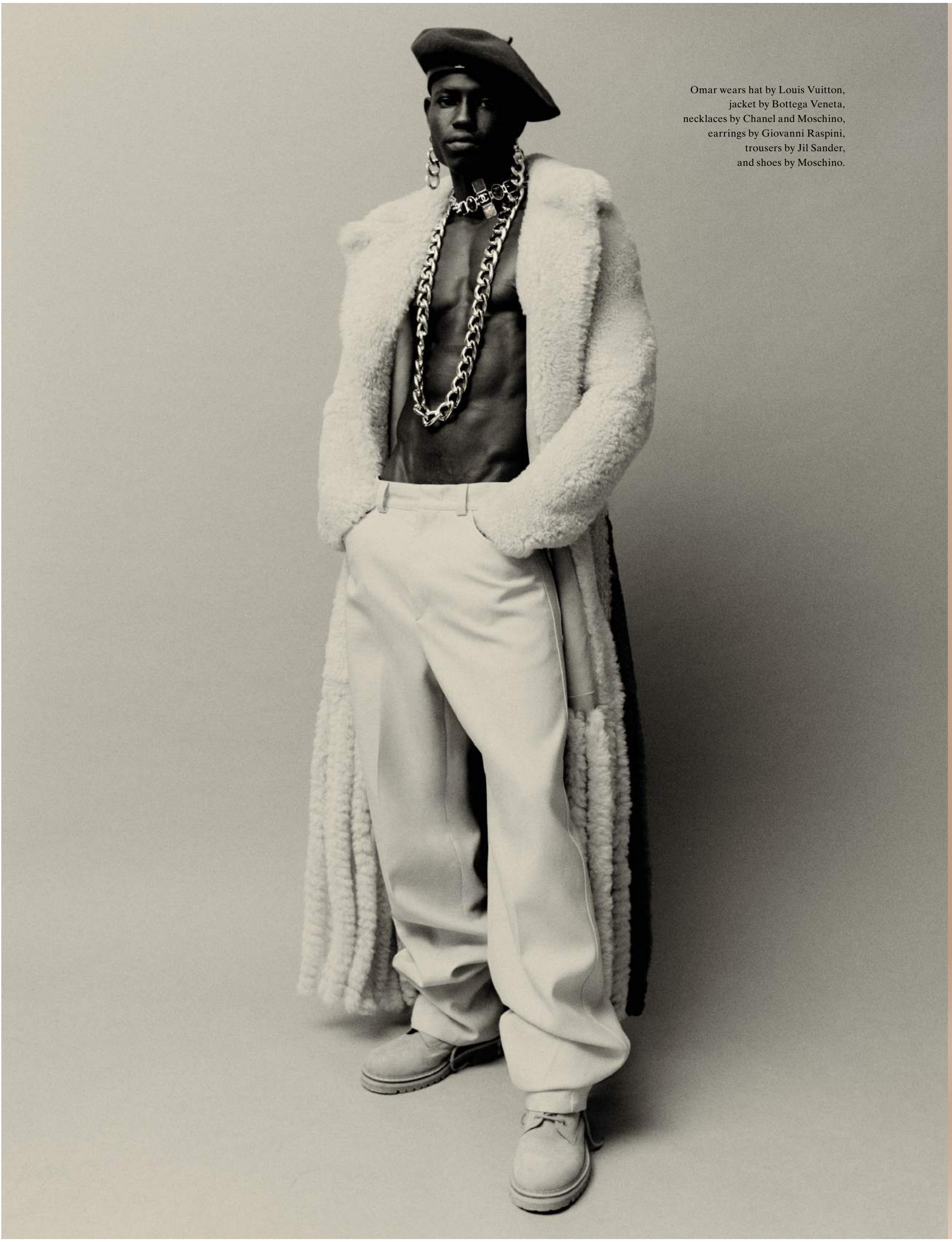
King wears hat
by Lock and Co. Hatters,
shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
trousers by Karolina Brown
over trousers by Jegor Pister,
gloves by Abdel El Tayeb,
and shoes by Erdem.



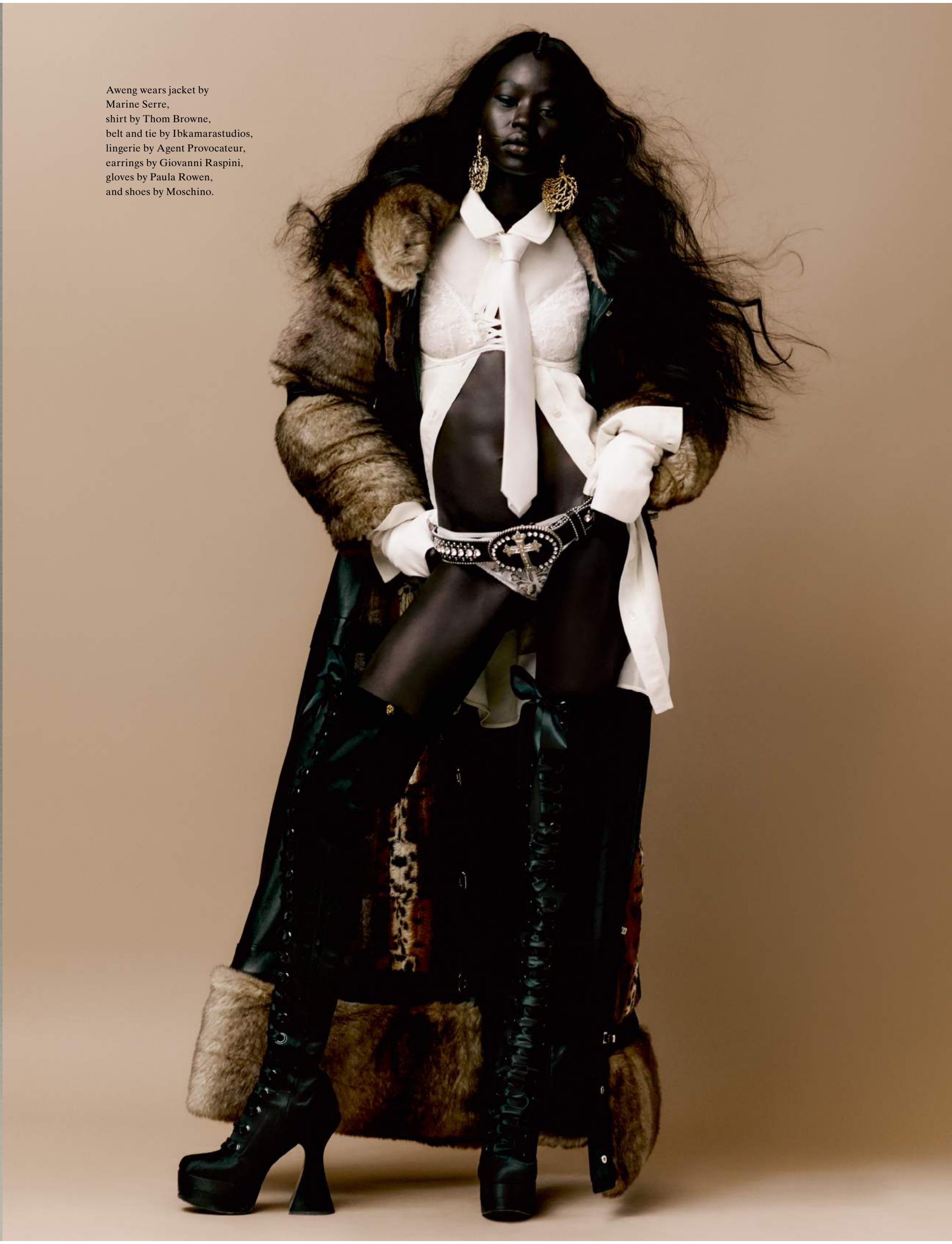
Aweng wears hat and tights
by Ibkamarastudios,
waistcoat by Dsquared2,
trousers by Ports 1961,
jacket by Jil Sander,
and shoes by Boss.



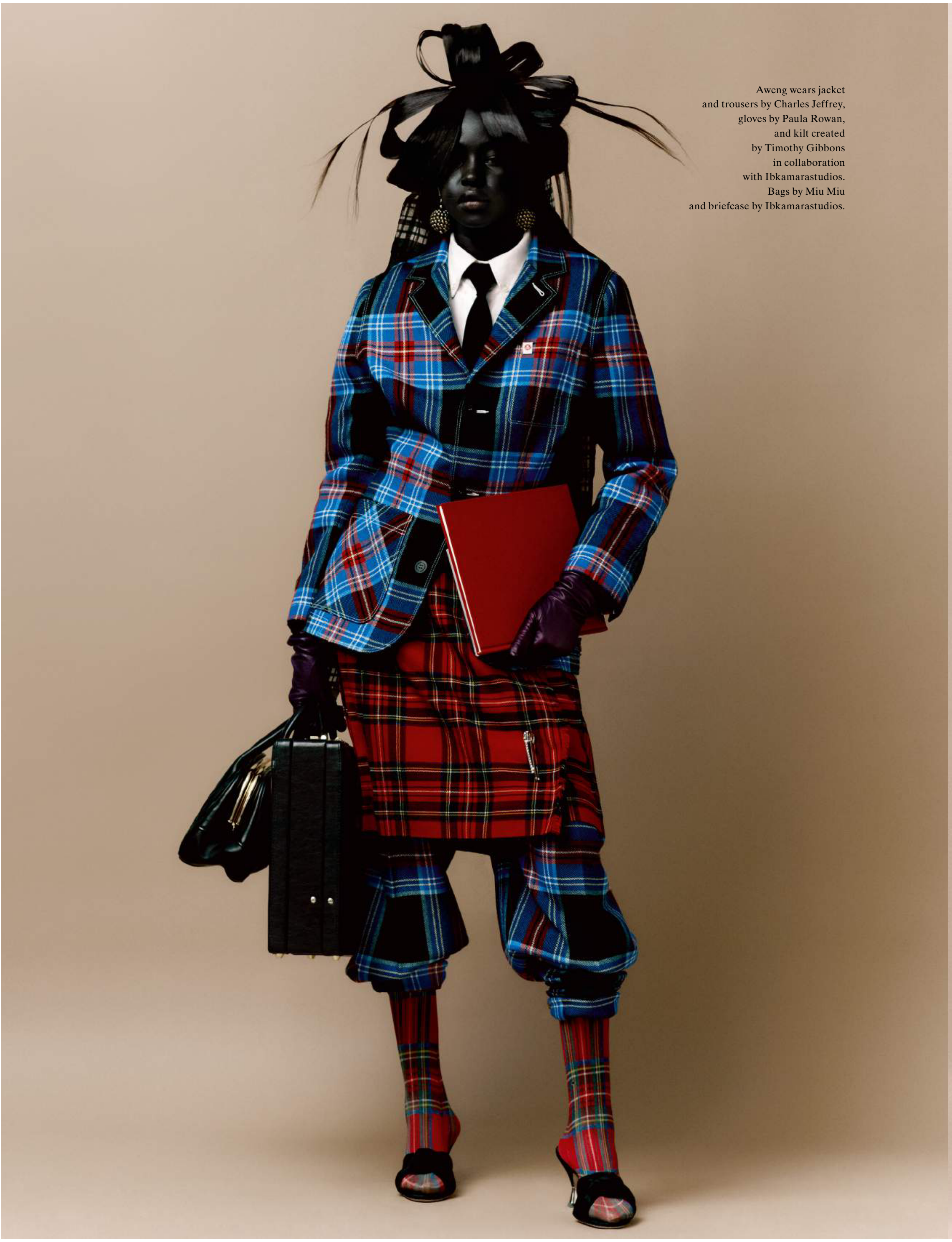
Awour wears jacket by Ports 1961,
shirt by Alyx Studio,
skirt by Ibkamarastudios,
boots by Dries Van Noten,
and hat from Costume Studio.



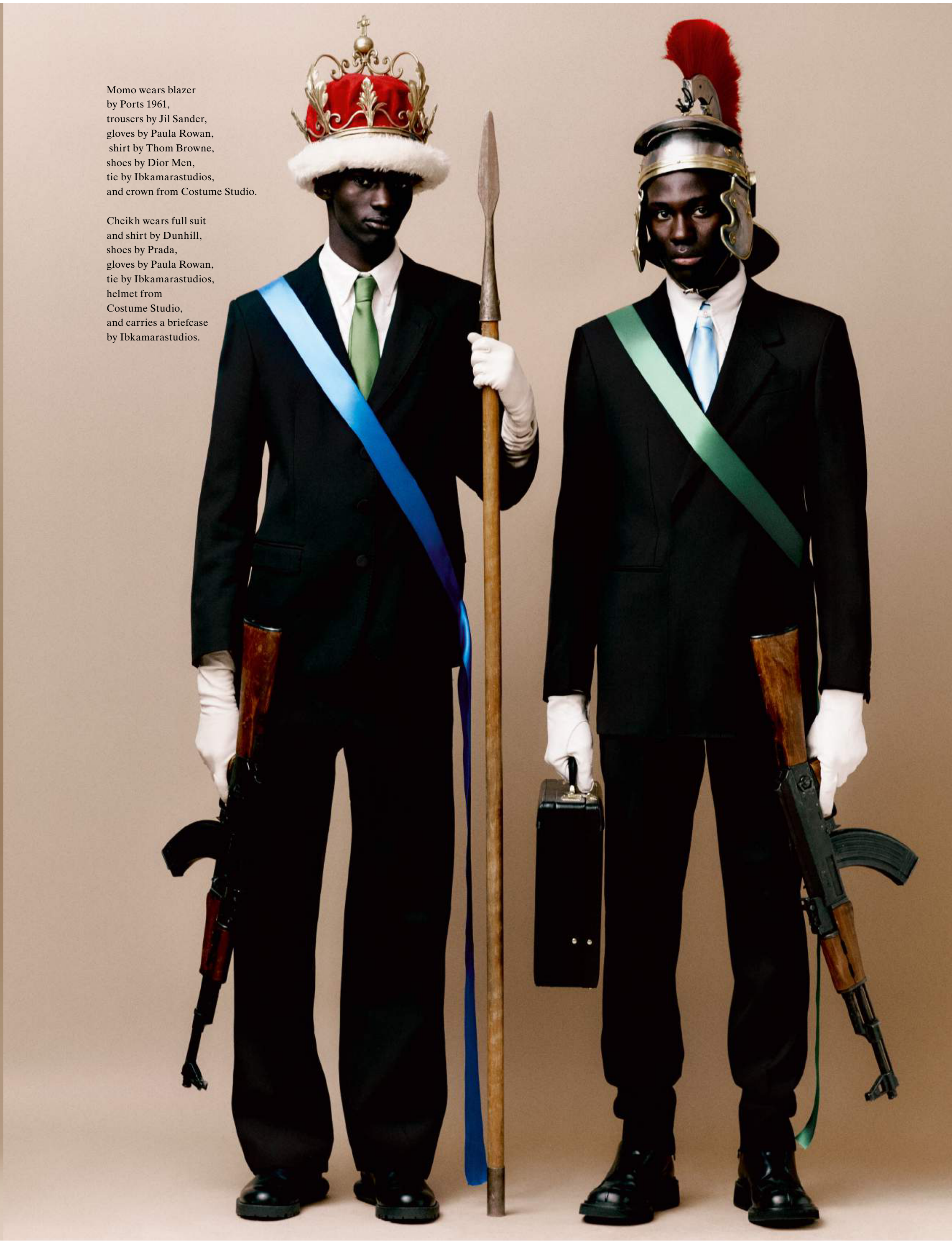
Omar wears hat by Louis Vuitton,
jacket by Bottega Veneta,
necklaces by Chanel and Moschino,
earrings by Giovanni Raspini,
trousers by Jil Sander,
and shoes by Moschino.



Aweng wears jacket by
Marine Serre,
shirt by Thom Browne,
belt and tie by Ibkamarastudios,
lingerie by Agent Provocateur,
earrings by Giovanni Raspini,
gloves by Paula Rowen,
and shoes by Moschino.

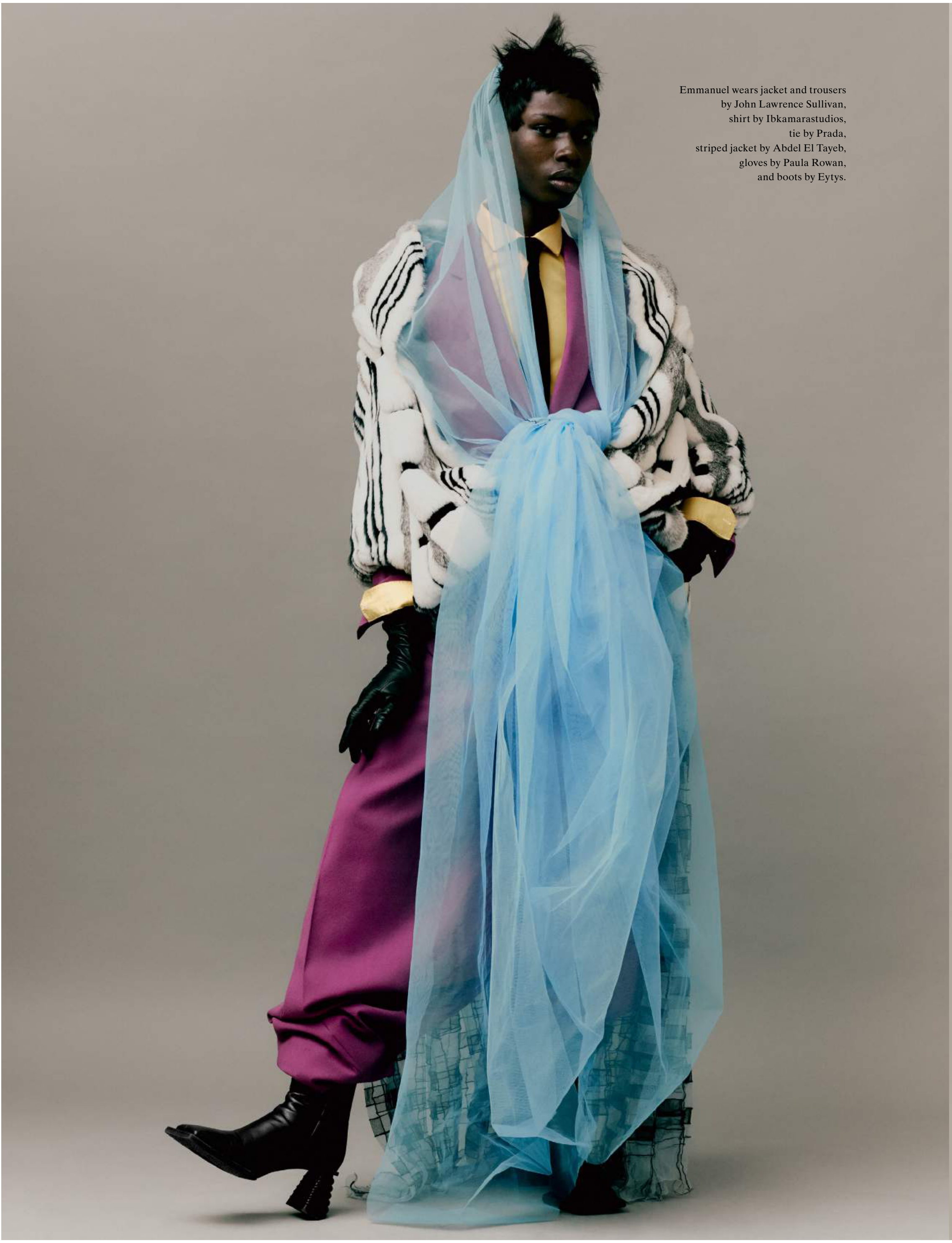


Aweng wears jacket
and trousers by Charles Jeffrey,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and kilt created
by Timothy Gibbons
in collaboration
with Ibkamarastudios.
Bags by Miu Miu
and briefcase by Ibkamarastudios.

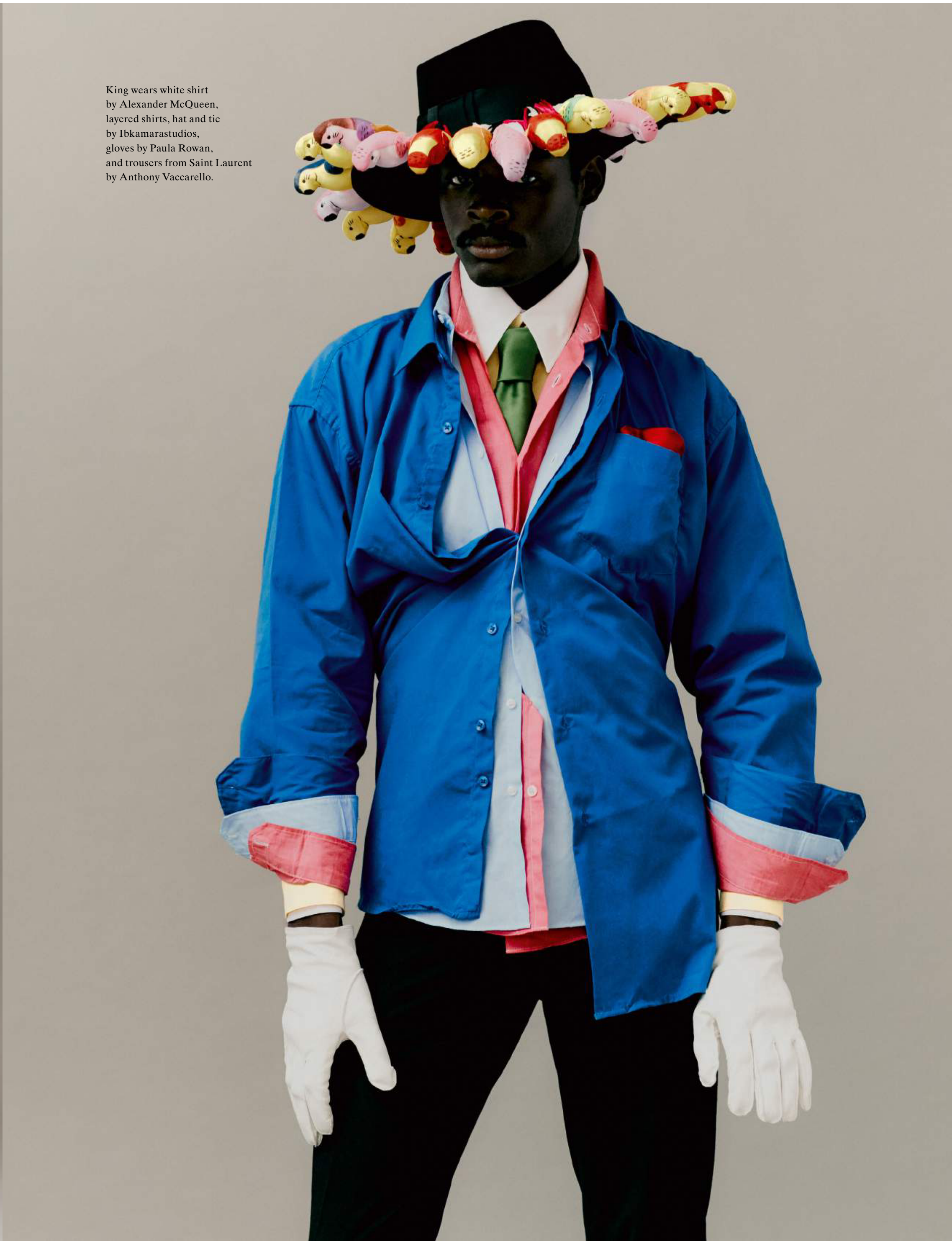


Momo wears blazer
by Ports 1961,
trousers by Jil Sander,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
shirt by Thom Browne,
shoes by Dior Men,
tie by Ibkamarastudios,
and crown from Costume Studio.

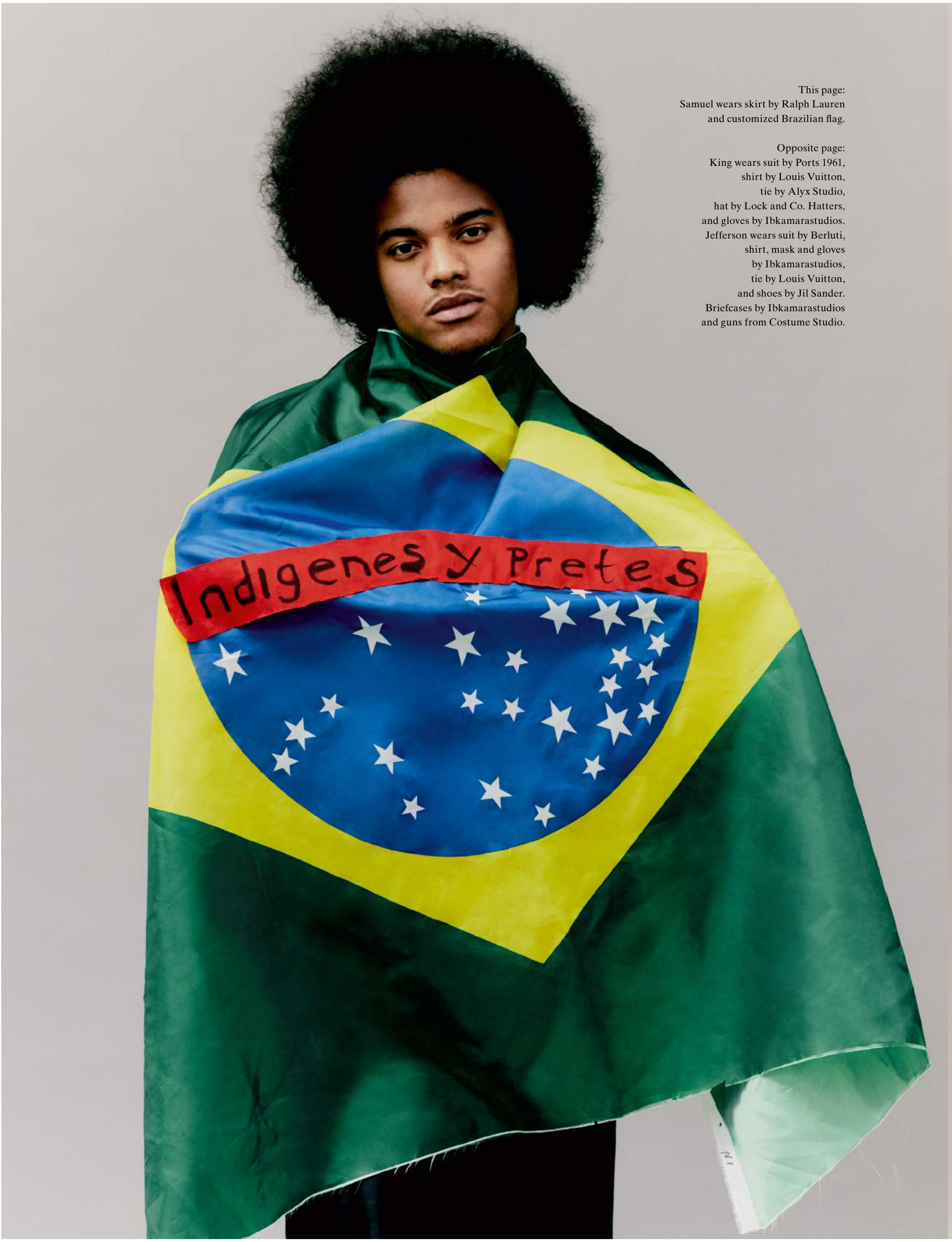
Cheikh wears full suit
and shirt by Dunhill,
shoes by Prada,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
tie by Ibkamarastudios,
helmet from
Costume Studio,
and carries a briefcase
by Ibkamarastudios.



Emmanuel wears jacket and trousers
by John Lawrence Sullivan,
shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
tie by Prada,
striped jacket by Abdel El Tayeb,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and boots by Eytys.

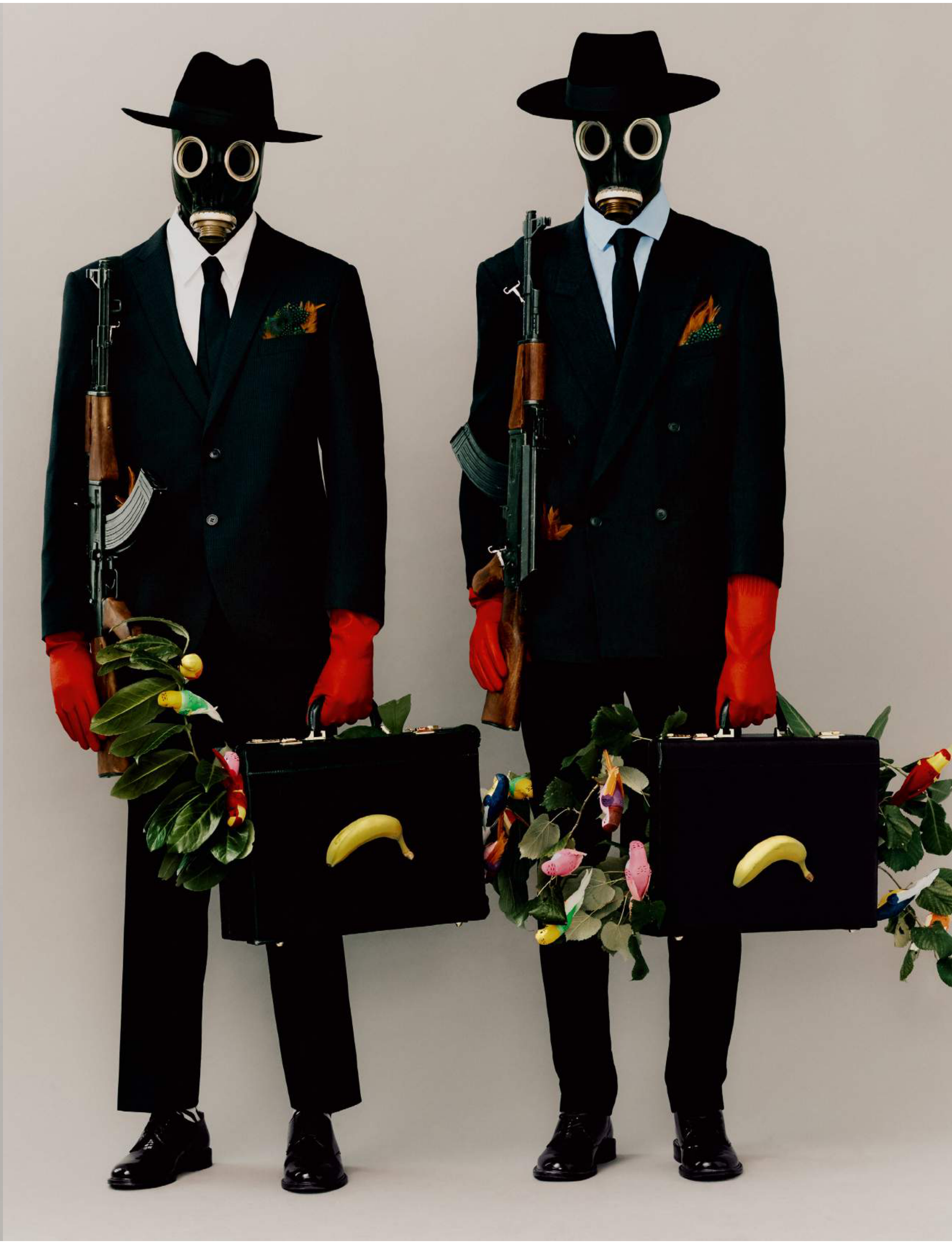


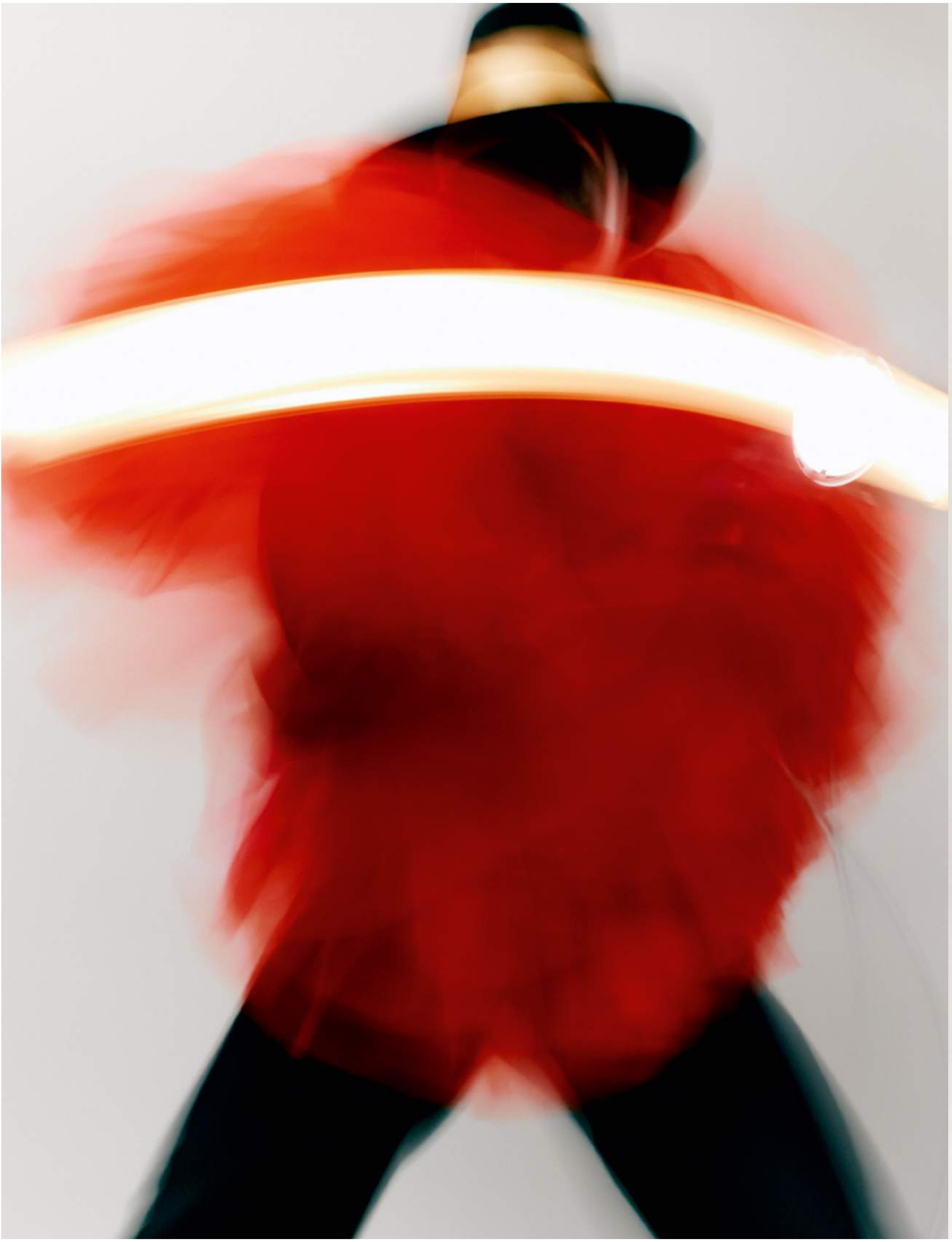
King wears white shirt
by Alexander McQueen,
layered shirts, hat and tie
by Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and trousers from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.



This page:
Samuel wears skirt by Ralph Lauren
and customized Brazilian flag.

Opposite page:
King wears suit by Ports 1961,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
tie by Alyx Studio,
hat by Lock and Co. Hatters,
and gloves by Ibkamarastudios.
Jefferson wears suit by Berluti,
shirt, mask and gloves
by Ibkamarastudios,
tie by Louis Vuitton,
and shoes by Jil Sander.
Briefcases by Ibkamarastudios
and guns from Costume Studio.



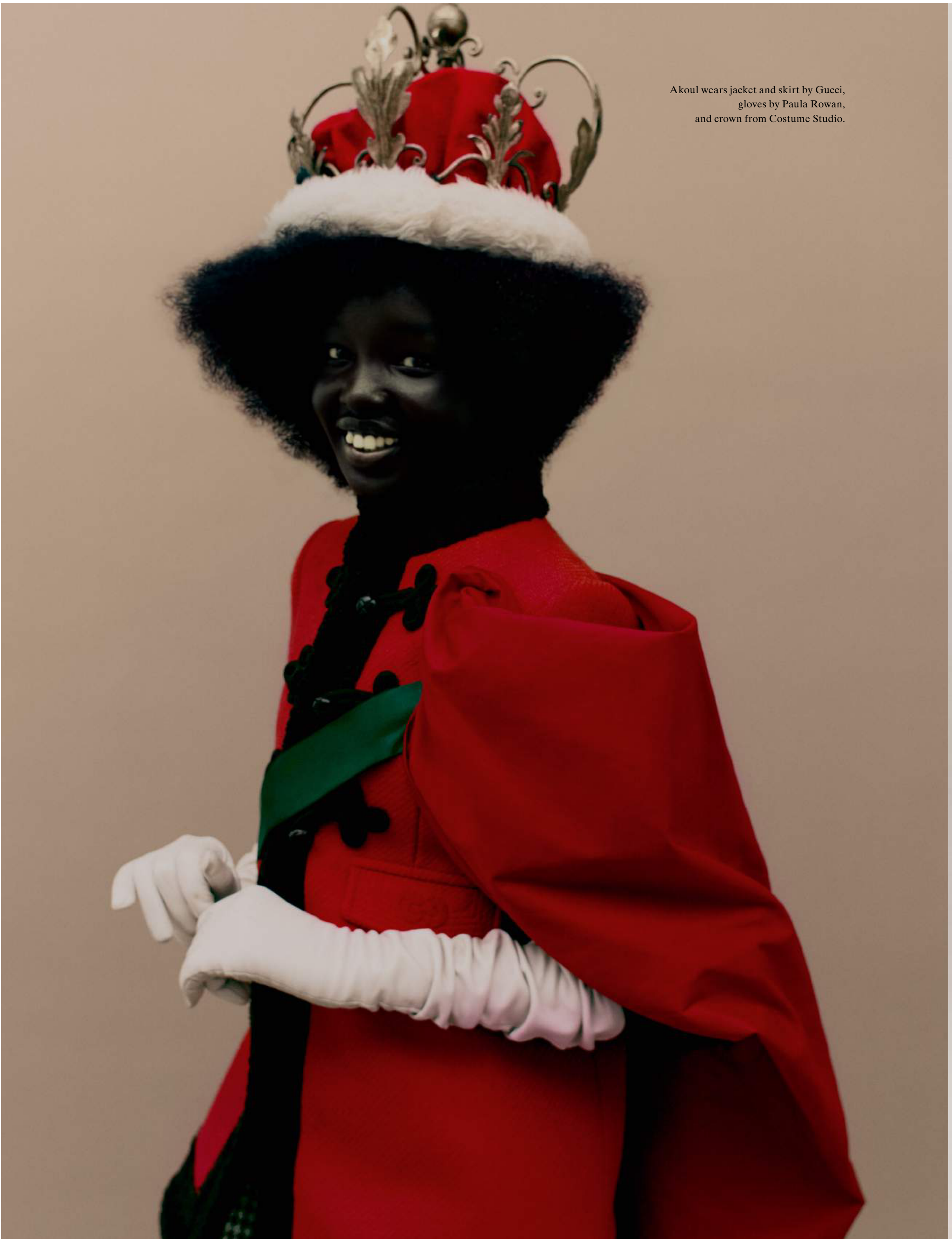


This page:
Ottawa wears skirt and dress
by Chopova Lowena,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
jacket by Jil Sander,
tights by Lauren Perrin,
heels by Manolo Blahnik,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and headpiece by Ibkamarastudios.

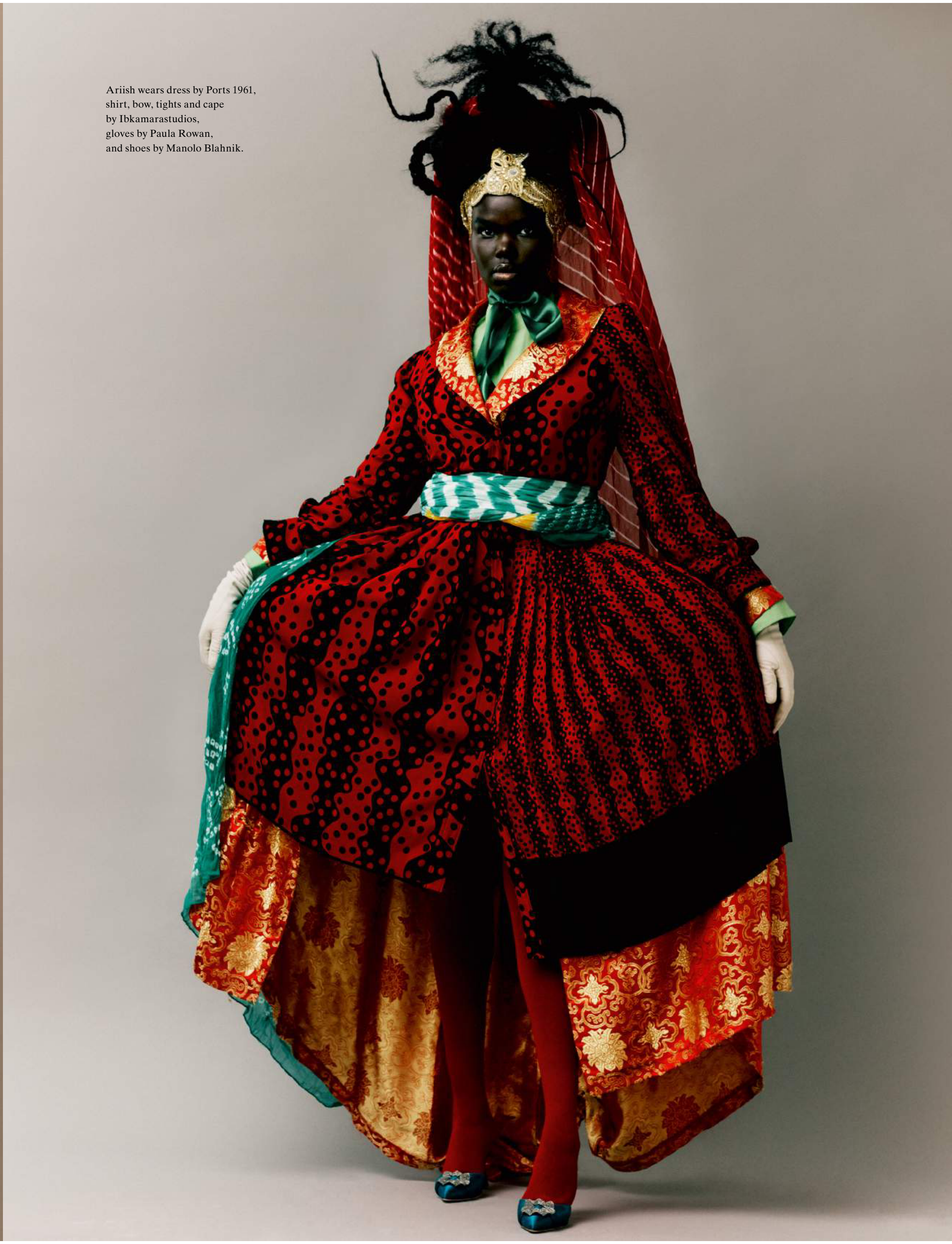
Opposite page:
Omar wears hat by Gucci,
dress by Giambattista Valli Couture,
and trousers from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.

Felix wears blazer and trousers by Prada,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shirt, tie, boots,
hat and cape by Ibkamarastudios.

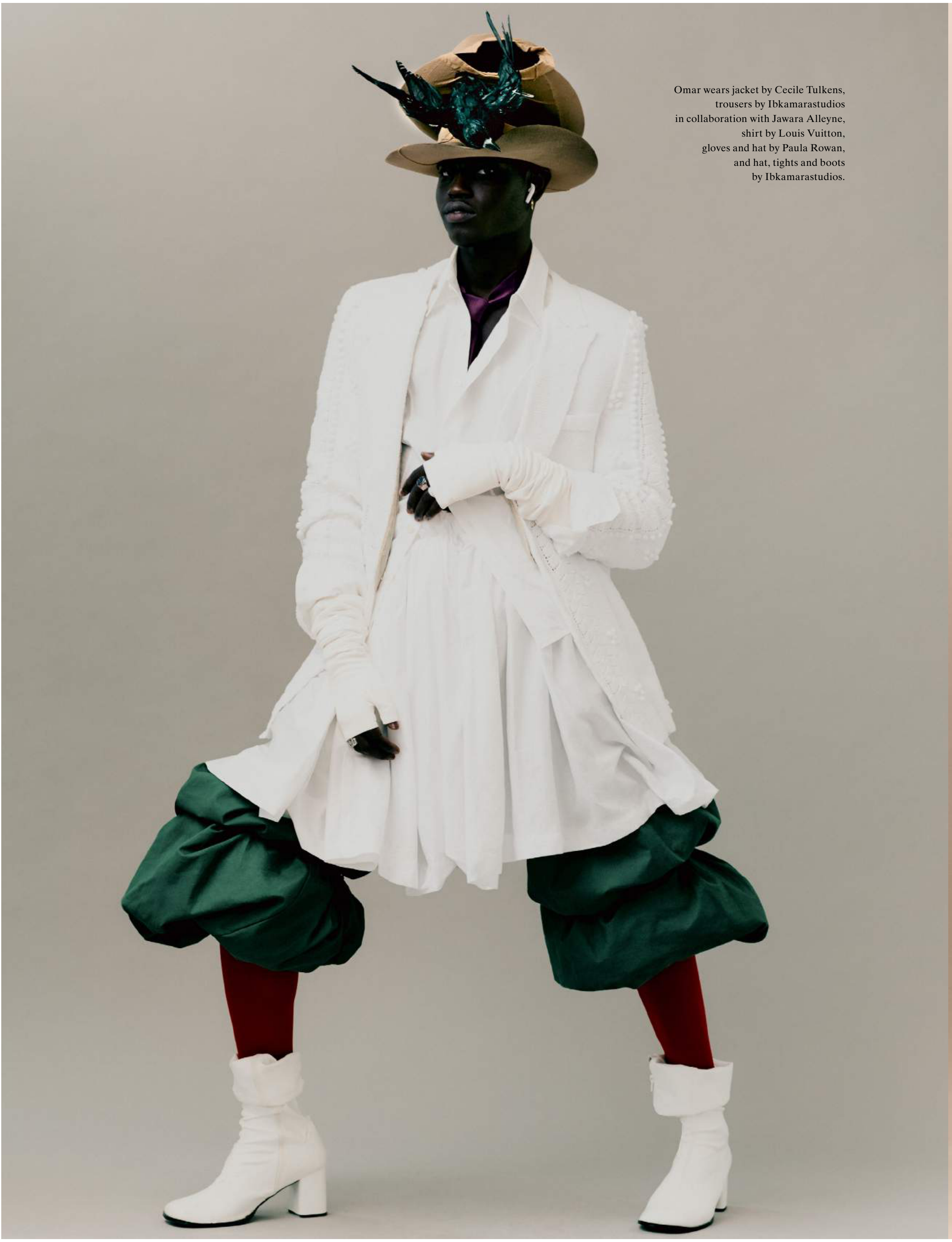
Samuel wears jacket and skirt
by Ralph Lauren,
shirt and tights by Ibkamarastudios,
tie by Alyx Studio,
and shoes from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.



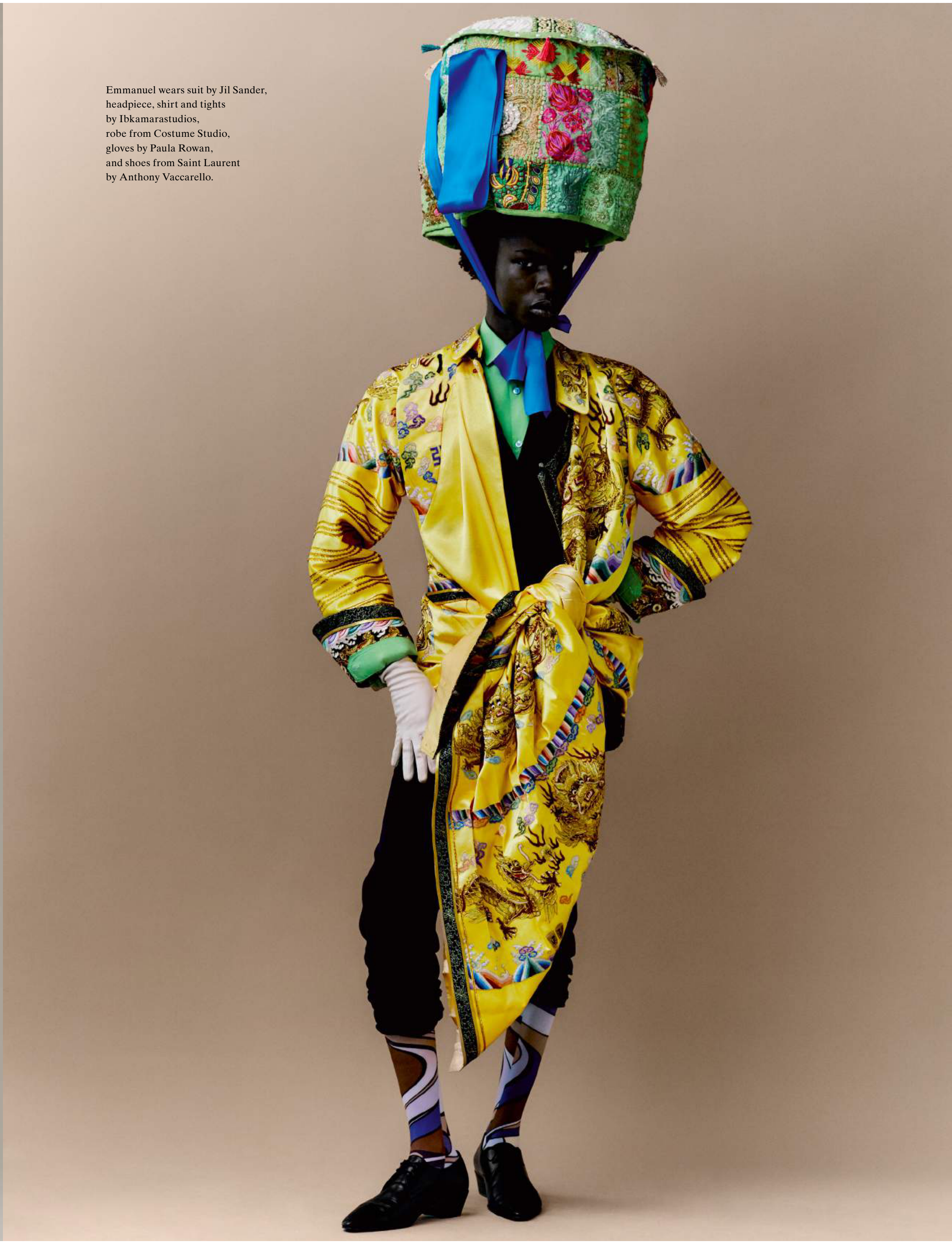
Akoul wears jacket and skirt by Gucci,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and crown from Costume Studio.



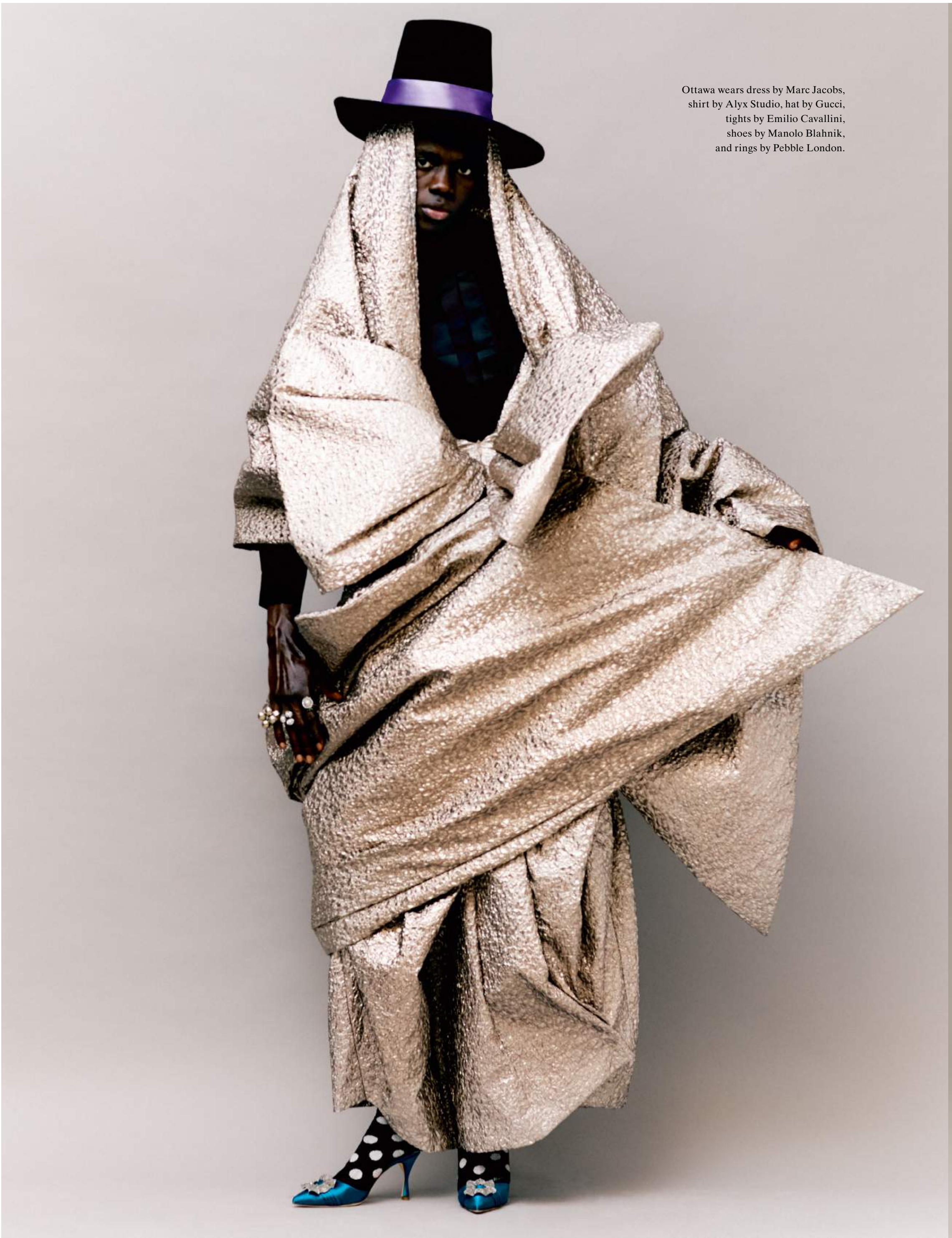
Ariish wears dress by Ports 1961,
shirt, bow, tights and cape
by Ibkamarastudios,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



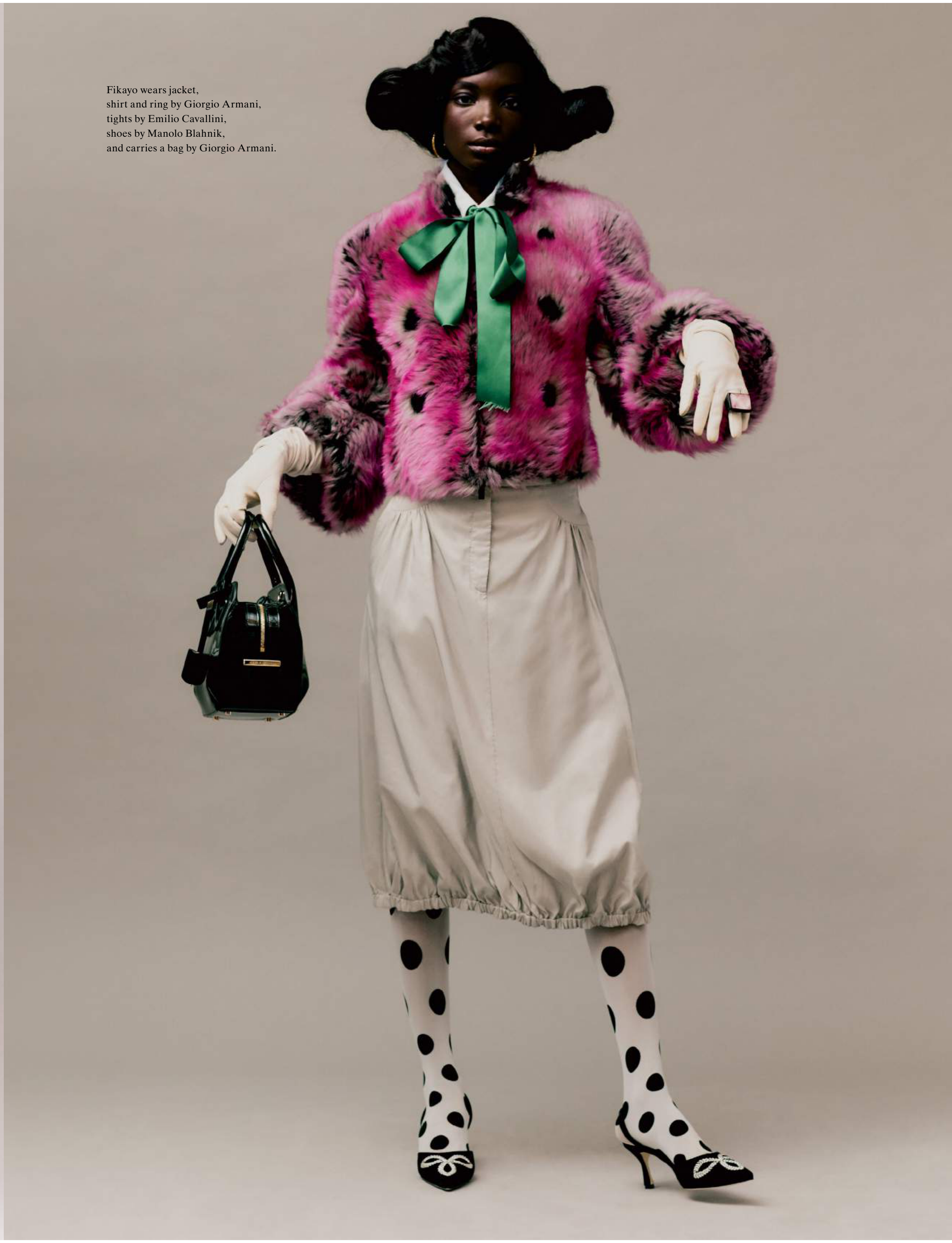
Omar wears jacket by Cecile Tulkens,
trousers by Ibkamarastudios
in collaboration with Jawara Alleyne,
shirt by Louis Vuitton,
gloves and hat by Paula Rowan,
and hat, tights and boots
by Ibkamarastudios.



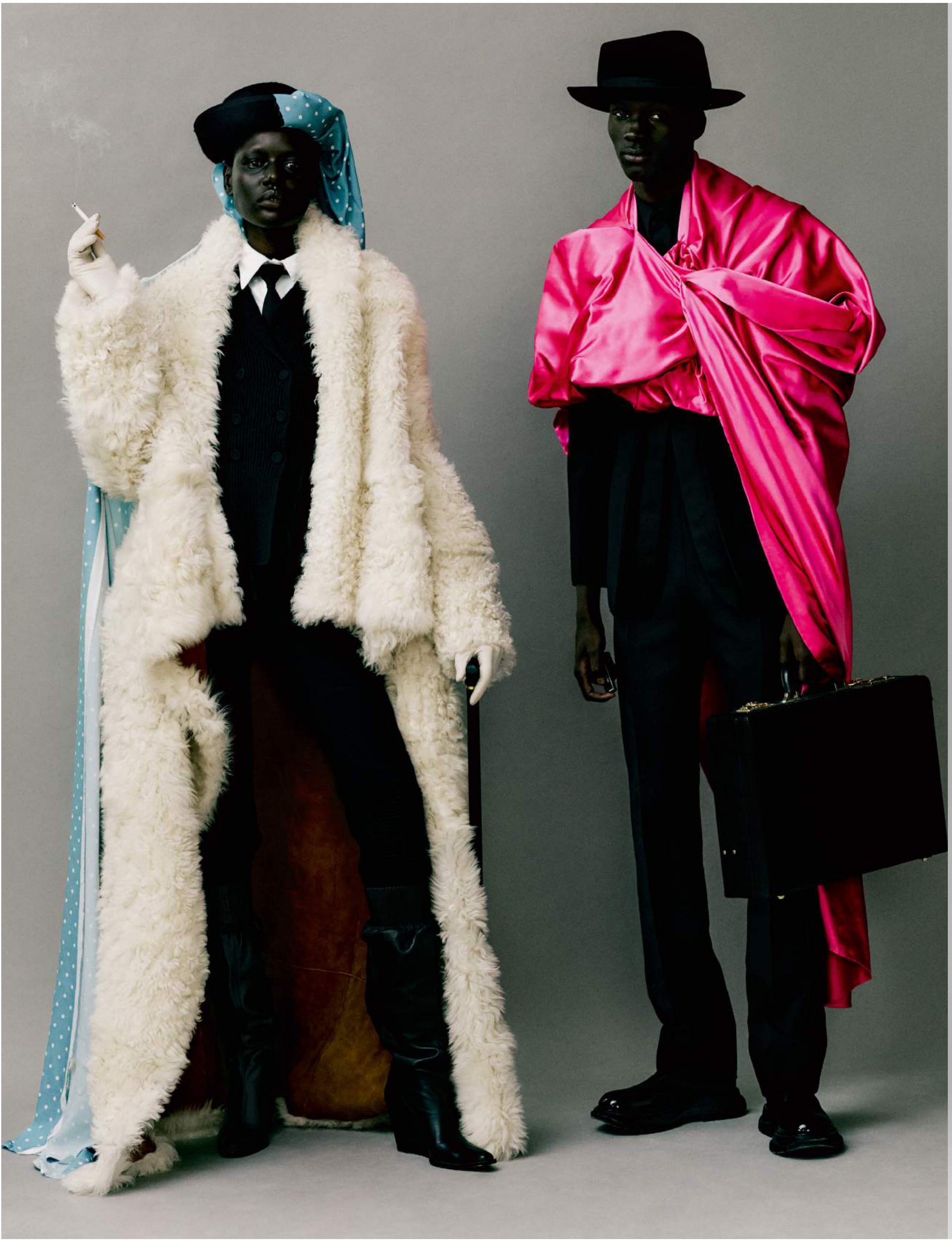
Emmanuel wears suit by Jil Sander,
headpiece, shirt and tights
by Ibkamarastudios,
robe from Costume Studio,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and shoes from Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.

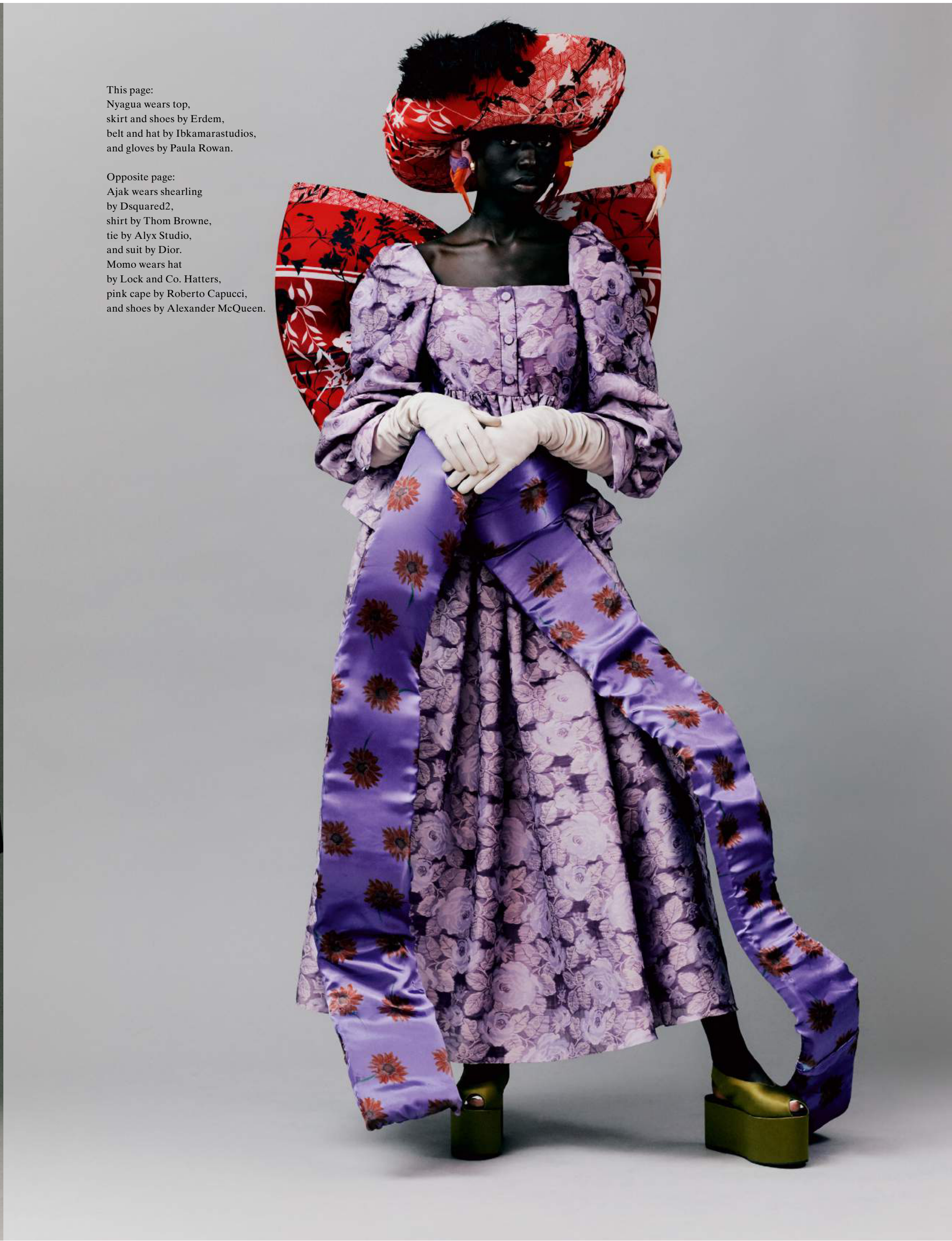


Ottawa wears dress by Marc Jacobs,
shirt by Alyx Studio, hat by Gucci,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
shoes by Manolo Blahnik,
and rings by Pebble London.



Fikayo wears jacket,
shirt and ring by Giorgio Armani,
tights by Emilio Cavallini,
shoes by Manolo Blahnik,
and carries a bag by Giorgio Armani.





This page:
Nyagua wears top,
skirt and shoes by Erdem,
belt and hat by Ibkamarastudios,
and gloves by Paula Rowan.

Opposite page:
Ajak wears shearling
by Dsquared2,
shirt by Thom Browne,
tie by Alyx Studio,
and suit by Dior.
Momo wears hat
by Lock and Co. Hatters,
pink cape by Roberto Capucci,
and shoes by Alexander McQueen.

This page:
Momo wears headpiece and shirt
by Ibkamarastudios,
dress by Emilia Wickstead,
gown from Costume Studio,
shoes by Thom Browne,
gloves by Paula Rowan,
and carries a bag by Miu Miu.

Opposite page:
Jefferson wears shirt by Ibkamarastudios,
blazer and trousers by Martine Rose,
tie by Alyx Studio,
black sleeve by Marine Serre,
and red gloves by Paula Rowan.

‘Even though we are from different parts of the world –

we have both dreamed of where our lives could take us.

This is our world.

What we create is what we are living right now.

It is everything all at once.

A shared love, a shared anger, a shared question, a shared vision.

A blueprint for a new world order.

There is no fear or controlling power –

only the freedom and energy to conceive and express what we want.

How do we put words to it? When it all just makes sense.

Your dreams are my dreams.’

Ibrahim Kamara and Rafael Pavarotti

Nyagua wears necklaces by Gansho
and shoes by Saint Laurent
by Anthony Vaccarello.

Hair stylist: Jawara @ Art Partner. Make-up: Ammy Drameh @ Bryant Artists. Fashion assistants: Felix Paradza, Mark Mutyambizi, Ethan Mullings, Lingani Noah.
Photography assistants: Felix Turnbull-Walter, Tarek Cassim. Models: Ajak @ MiLK, Akuol @MiLK, Ariish @ MiLK, Aweng @ Models 1, Awour @ MiLK, Binta @ Elite, Cheikh, Emmanuelle @ Next, Felix, Fikayo @ PRM,
Jefferson @ PRM, King @ The Squad, Malick @ Success, Momo @ Supa, Myarach @ PRM, Niko @ MiLK, Nyagua @ MiLK, Omar @ PRM, Ottawa @ Wilhelmina, Samuel, Sebrina @ D1.

Mass consumption

How post-lockdown binge shopping in China is keeping the industry afloat. By Hung Huang. Photograph by Erwan Frotin

If you are Chinese and have been in lockdown between January 24 and March 31, what is the first thing you do when you can leave the house on April 1? A run in the park? A visit to see friends? A trip to your favourite restaurant? No! The first thing you do is rush to the local luxury mall, run to your favourite luxury brand, and let that credit card rip!

Yes, luxury sales went into hyper-growth mode after mainland China ended its lockdown and long lines immediately began to form outside malls due to pandemic regulations. Everyone has a health app and if you want to enter a mall and shop, your personal health status had better flash green and your temperature had better be under 37.3º Celsius when tested at the door. And last but not least, you better be wearing a mask.

Once inside, you can become part of the stampede towards the Louis Vuitton menswear section and Virgil Abloh's latest, or perhaps the dash to Hermès to make sure that the one Lindy in elephant grey that you saw before the pandemic is still there. People – and by that, I mean Western people – who find this behaviour bizarre and strange, started to call it 'revenge shopping'.

Which doesn't make sense. Revenge against what? The phrase is actually a direct translation from Chinese internet-speak: *bào fù* is the word for revenge, but it also means to do something with excessive vigour. So actually, it's more like 'binge shopping'. What it's called doesn't really matter; what does is why the world's largest market for luxury goods has such strange habits. Its consumers get super-sensitive when Dolce & Gabbana makes fun of chopsticks, but amused when Balenciaga revives 1980s Chinese kitsch for a Valentine's Day bag advertising campaign. China is also probably the only country where salespersons allegedly require consumers to buy other goods equal to 150% of the price tag of a bag in order to sell it to them. It's called – and here's another Chinese word for you – *pèi é* or quota shopping. And the quotas, I hear, are hitting ridiculous new highs.

There are reasons why Chinese love to shop luxury. The first, I think, is that there are lots of people with lots of money. Wealth is concentrated in the richest 5-10% of the Chinese population, and with a base number of 1.5 billion people, 10% means 150 million luxury shoppers. That's equivalent to almost half the population of the USA. Wealth in China is also young, either first generation or second generation, and the wealthiest teens in private schools don't have to wear uniforms.

The second reason is the dominance of commercial culture in China. There aren't many museums and cultural venues in China, and most of them are financed and owned by the government, with the exception of those in Shanghai. For 40 years, to look at new things, beautiful things and novelties, the Chinese flocked to the shopping mall. (I should also note here that malls were the first spaces to open after lockdown. Who says communists don't worry about consumer spending!)

The third reason: the Chinese are old fashioned when it comes to political systems, but committed early adopters of new fashion and technology. The fact that the fashion market can satisfy that thirst for novelty is a huge plus for the industry in China. 'Just arrived!' is always good advertising here.

The rebound of luxury sales in China after the pandemic has also finally answered the question about whether the Chinese only buy luxury abroad because it's cheaper. The answer appears to be no. If Chinese consumers want cheaper, there is Taobao – China and the world's e-commerce site – they don't need to go to Louis Vuitton or Gucci. Of course, if they can travel and so avoid paying the luxury tax in China, then they will, but if the borders are closed, they won't hesitate to get their fill at home.

Are these signs of the emergence of a mature luxury market? Maybe. Aren't all the rich Chinese fleeing China with their money? Probably not. The lifestyle of the top 10% is rarely affected by an economic downturn in any society, and as for the rich emigrating, honestly, they may want a foreign passport, but they still want their favourite local bowl of noodles: pasta is still not considered a daily staple for any Chinese stomach.

A change of lens

Today's most important photographers are those who have been silenced.

By Mahmoud 'Mo' Mfinanga. Photograph by Erwan Frotin

Seven years ago I created Emmazed, a community-oriented online platform that primarily profiles contemporary photographers. Navigating this industry as a Black photographer and photo editor, I wanted to use the conversations I was having with other photographers, such as Luis Alberto Rodriguez, Ronan Mckenzie, and Farah Al-Qasimi, to find out if photography was a genuine reflection of its climate. As these dialogues gave my inquiries a foundation, the answers they yielded were troubling. The most concerning discovery was the debt of racial biases that white practitioners have collected in this industry at the expense of their non-white contemporaries, particularly Black artists.

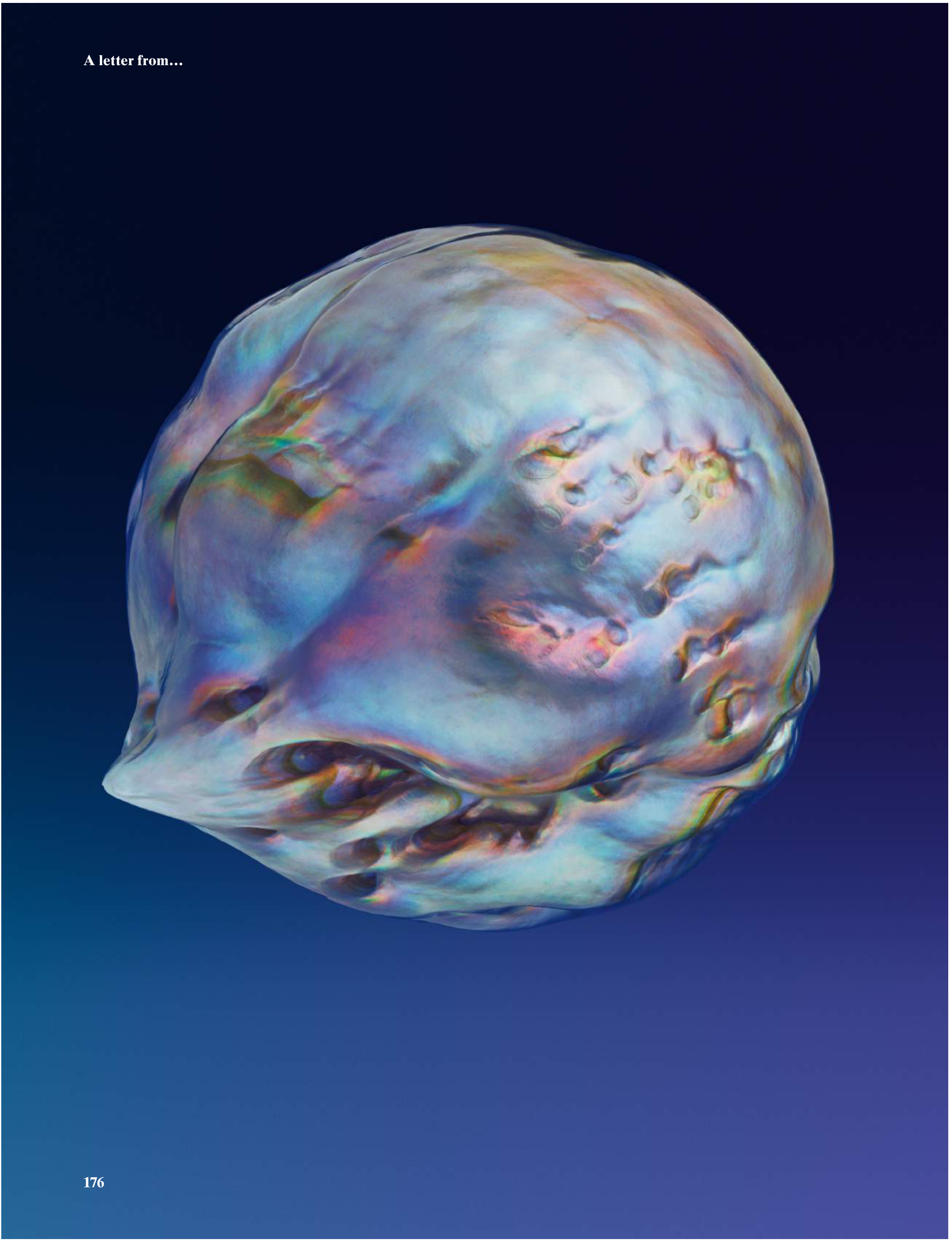
Before Covid-19 and the murder of George Floyd tore through the fabric of our globalized society, the photography community at large was in cruise control, mindlessly blasting Kendrick Lamar on the stereo without actually listening to his lyrics. *Few* photographers were aware of the lack of representation and accessibility faced by their non-white contemporaries, and *many* were in denial – or being completely obtuse – about how much they had profited from the industry's racial biases. Photo editors, art buyers, agents, and creative directors, among others, rarely questioned their hiring practices until the world burning down forced them to begin to think about hiring Black photographers, to question if the environment they had created was safe and contributed to the well-being of people who didn't look like them, and to acknowledge the troubles they had manufactured through their colonial gaze.

So, what did these white people then do? They hired people of colour. 'Problem solved!' they exclaimed, as they gleefully reposted the work of their favourite Black photographer – Gordon Parks or Tyler Mitchell – on Instagram, while turning the volume back up on 'King Kunta'. The problem shifted to the assumption that we all have the same interpretation of progress, along with who should determine whether it's being made. It might be argued that it could begin by giving space to non-white people to navigate this industry as freely as white people have always been allowed to do. Every practitioner in photography needs to be aware of and to help reform the practices that have been systemically ingrained to prevent change. Like when *Vanity Fair* loudly proclaimed that it had hired its first Black photographer to shoot a cover – just as *Vogue* had already done back in 2018 – but then took no time to reflect upon why it had taken nearly 40 years to 'grant' this opportunity. Sure, it was 'nice' that they had begun hiring Black photographers, but what structural changes were they going to make to introduce Black photo editors? Don't just give us the pen. Give us the paper, too.

These days I keep reflecting back to the 1930s, when the Great Depression ruptured the surface of society. Photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Gordon Parks were hired by the Farm Security Administration, a US government-initiated programme, to capture evidence of the economic fire. This programme gave photographers a communal responsibility, suggesting that as the rocks of life cracked, they could chisel through its exterior and reveal a deepened sense of grace and engagement with our world. Though this type of government aid hasn't been replicated in the age of Covid-19, photography has still brought direct, substantial help, particularly in America: through the efforts of photographers working together on photo print sales, it has raised millions of dollars for hospitals (Pictures For Elmhurst), social and justice-related projects (See In Black), the fight against voter suppression (States of Change), and, in the UK, food banks (Photographs for the Trussell Trust). These initiatives remind us that the crossroads at which we find ourselves as photographers is also where we stand as citizens.

As a community of artists, we should be critically aware of how and *if* photography is reflecting the reality around us. To achieve this, I'm a firm believer in giving power to the streets, to Black women, to trans people – all of whom have been barred from the main stage. Their marginalization reveals the full extent of disenfranchisement that affects every non-white artist. As we take this journey, we need to keep asking questions. Are we continuing to acknowledge our biases and engaging with the uncomfortable but necessary action to disengage from them? Are we doing more than just adding to social-media feeds? If you're a gatekeeper, are you genuinely willing to sacrifice your ambitions to allow someone else to reach theirs?

So let's not only be occupied with the internal or external importance of our work, but also focus on why we exist in the spaces we occupy, how we can recalibrate our perspectives when we learn new information, and who we uplift while doing so. Today, perhaps the most important photographers are those who need to be heard – the previously silenced.



The skins trade

How the art and industry of gaming might hold the future for fashion. By Mohamed Megdoul. Photograph by Erwan Frotin

I was born in the 1980s and video games have always been part of my culture. I’ve watched them become both art and industry and, because they’re tied to technological innovation, I’ve witnessed their constant evolution. Each day new visual languages and ways to play are emerging, as well as innovative, surprising and sometimes revolutionary interactive processes. Despite this, they are often inspired by concepts or aesthetics produced by other cultural domains, and one of the gaming world’s biggest transformations over the past few years is actually rooted in a phenomenon first noted in the late 19th century. Games manufacturers have understood, as fashion has long done, the concept first put forward by American sociologist Thorstein Veblen, of ‘conspicuous consumption’.

This new trend in gaming is perhaps best exemplified by *Fortnite*, the shooter-game phenomenon that’s free to download and play yet still earned $1.8 billion for its creator, Epic Games, in 2019. Most of that revenue came from the sale of avatar skins – or virtual outfits – and accessories within the game, which allow players to show off their difference from their fellow gamers. The companies that make games such as *Fortnite*, *Warzone*, *Pubg* or *Apex* have taken up Veblen’s notion – originally a criticism of the Gilded Age – and used it as the basis of an economic revolution. In 2019, the global video and electronic games market generated over $152.1 billion – $109 million more than the global film box office.

Sensing both the financial and marketing opportunities, fashion houses have made various incursions into the gaming universe through partnerships with existing games (*The Sims* × Moschino; Louis Vuitton × *Final Fantasy*) or by commissioning mini-games to accompany the launch of clothing lines or a collection (Gucci Arcade; Burberry B Bounce). Recently, as real-life events have become impossible, labels have taken refuge in virtual spaces (*Animal Crossing* × numerous brands). Nevertheless, even the most interesting of these collaborations still see brands treating games as just another media space. They rarely understand it as a complete creative culture with its own language, one that can actually inspire radical creativity.

It’s an attitude I’ve encountered since I was at ENSAD, an art and design school in Paris, where 500 students would analyse, dissect and reinterpret all forms of cultural industries – contemporary art, movies, animation, design, graphic design and fashion – all except one, despite it being perhaps the world’s most influential: video games. That was one of the reasons why I founded a magazine, *Immersion*, in 2017: I wanted to understand the impact on the world of gaming’s aesthetics and philosophy, how the industry has become part of art and culture, and been nourished by and influenced other practices. That influence and power can only deepen as gaming alters our relationship with reality and video games become multiverses of feelings, memories and emotions.

Recently, I was in feudal 12th-century Japan. Playing a samurai in the game *Ghosts of Tsushima*, I was hiding out from my enemies in long grass. The greenery surrounding me dynamically reacted to my movements in a way that was technically impossible only a few years ago but is today almost commonplace. As I sat in that amazingly rendered, stunningly reactive grass I began to wonder how similar techniques could be used to strengthen our ties to a brand, a design, a material, even a texture. Could the same game-design techniques be used to recreate the *feeling* and touch of a chiffon or a velvet? Could it help designers bring real emotion to the virtual rather than just a straightforward representation of a product? Because while I could describe what I did during my game of *Ghosts of Tsushima*, I would have difficulty conveying how I *felt* as I crossed those virtual landscapes and interacted with the world. Gaming is an emotional medium; it creates unique sensorial and physical sensations, which if taken seriously by the industry could make it as important to fashion as photography, film, magazines or shows.

Isn’t it time that a fashion house worked with a legendary games designer to develop a global campaign as a gaming experience, a glorious interactive massive online fashion multiverse? The result could not just be a chance to show off clothes, but also a major cultural and historical landmark. Isn’t it time to move beyond virtual avatars or offering collections of branded skins inside games and take what gaming can offer in terms of truly immersive experiences? Game designers can surely find new ways to use the mechanisms of gameplay to serve brands and their ambitions. The industry should no longer be content to remain on the surface; it should instead take a deep dive into a medium that offers untold possibilities to help fashion continue doing what it has always done – change how we see the world.

‘It’s about shifting people’s perceptions of South Africa.’

Johannesburg-based designer Thebe Magugu uses fashion both to celebrate and interrogate his homeland.

By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Portrait by Kristin-Lee Moolman
Photographs by Tim Elkaïm
Styling by Agata Belcen

Duality, identity, power, performance: Thebe Magugu packs big themes around his luxury ready-to-wear. His Spring/Summer 2021 collection, *Counter Intelligence*, was presented as a CCTV-style film and inspired by the former spies of apartheid South Africa – those for the regime, fighting against it, or playing both sides. As stories are read about the spies over a 1960s espionage visual aesthetic, the Johannesburg-based designer's collection reveals a wealth of rich and subversive detail. A polygraph line informs the pattern on a parka. Polka dots, on closer inspection, are the fingerprints of a female operative. Berets and holsters act as nods to militant activism. Drawn from extensive, intense investigation, *Counter Intelligence* brims with intelligence in its first sense, too, in the deft elegance of its ideas and the confidence of their execution. While Magugu revels in his research, the clothes wear that learning lightly.

> **'Not being able to afford to move to Paris, London or New York was a blessing in disguise, because it forced me to look locally in South Africa.'**

Fashion has precious few references for South Africa, an absence the designer looks to fill a little more with each collection. Explorations of his homeland run through his work, along with an urge to educate and inform. But just as the winner of the 2019 LVMH Prize celebrates South Africa, he interrogates it, too. He wants, above all, to tell you where he's coming from. The playful and political Magugu spoke to leading contemporary arts curator Hans Ulrich Obrist about his homeland, subterfuge, subtlety, deception, and the transformative power of a good story.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Thebe, how did you come to fashion, and how did fashion come to you? Was there an epiphany or was it a gradual process?

Thebe Magugu: It was really small things. It wasn't a massive 'aha!' moment; little things steered me in that direction. It definitely started at home with my family and my mother in particular. No one was really into fashion, but they had such a deep respect and love for it. Whenever we had to go to church or any sort of event, dressing up was a really important part. I always used to laugh at how my mom would take it a step further. When she bought a new dress, she would always ask how she should act in it. Should she act rude? Should she be nice? She understood the idea that fashion assigns a character to you. When I was quite young, she bought satellite television, so we would gather and watch MTV and the fashion seasons that came and went with it.

It's interesting how the future is often invented with fragments from the past. Which fashion designers inspired you?

From the very beginning, it was always Alexander McQueen. When I looked at fashion for the first time, when we got satellite television, his might have been one of the first shows that I saw. It just blew my mind. Obviously, fashion has a commercial side, but Alexander McQueen – all these fantasies, and the surreal world that was presented through his clothes; I saw him as a god, almost. It was McQueen for his imagination, and, as I grew older, Prada also became one of my favourite brands, because there was always something a little challenging about it. I don't know what it was, but the clothes weren't stereotypically beautiful. There was something really appealing about that.

Was there anything in fashion in South Africa that inspired you?

It's funny you should ask that, because when I was growing up I only saw European or global fashion. There wasn't much focus on South African fashion. I said to my mom, clearly there isn't any fashion happening in South Africa, and I have to move to Paris or London or New York. And she said, yes, but look at our circumstances, you can't possibly move; we just can't afford it. That was a blessing in disguise, because it forced me to look locally. I'm from a small town – Kimberley, in the Northern Cape – and I moved to Johannesburg to study fashion design, fashion photography, and fashion media. There, I opened up to the incredible things that were happening culturally in South Africa and I drew so much from that into my collections. Season after season, I incorporate something about South Africa into the collections. They're not necessarily always positive things. One of the collections, *Home Economics*, looked at the problem of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa, which is growing at such a rapid rate. It's important to look at things that need to be put under the spotlight.

Of course, that incredible violence in South African society is something one can see a lot in photography.

How can I put this? As much beauty as we have in South Africa, there is still an inherent sense of anger. I feel that it's also because we are such a new country. The old regime devastated so many people, and that anger and disappointment has moved through some of the generations. That is why you see gender-based violence happening, and this sense of disenchantment. It is something that is within the culture.

> **'My early collections were named after university subjects; I want my brand to be like an institution, teaching people about South African culture.'**

I mention photography because film and photography and art combined all seem to play a big role in your work.

I am obsessed with how mediums run into one another. You know, culturally, I am both Sotho and Tswana,[1] and those tribes are very well known for their storytelling. I would like to think that I tell a story, season after season, not only through the clothes, but through imagery as well. In the *Ipopeng Ext.* exhibition I did for the [Autumn/Winter 2020] *Anthro 1* collection, I wanted to showcase the clothes on the people I grew up with. The suburb I am from is called Ipopeng, which means 'beautify yourself' in Setswana, but it is not the most beautiful of places, visually. There is still a lot of violence there, but it was my home. In the exhibition, you see the pastor, the altar boys and girls who I grew up with, my cousins, and the landscapes that I would take walks in. I really love the idea that those people, who don't necessarily have any fashion references, ended up in Paris, exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo. That collection had the idea of taking a basic staple and turning it on its head. Growing up, everyone would be in denim, so I took denim, shredded it into strips, photocopied it and printed it onto cotton. I had ostrich feathers, too, jutting out so that they looked like shredded denim. I remember my grandmother used to cover all the surfaces at home with this PVC print, so I took a photograph of that, changed the colour and used it for my Kitchen Table Parka. Functionality is very important. The women I dress want to feel beautiful in the clothes, but they have really demanding lives. In Sotho culture, people wear blankets and massive straw hats,[2] which I find so beautiful, but aren't realistic for anyone's day-to-day. So I might take a print that is sacred to our people and have it woven into a cotton. Recontextualized as a poncho, it gives you a sense of the culture, but you are not inconvenienced by it. I always try to strike that balance.

In one of your earliest shows in 2016, the collection was accompanied by a rocking chair. Was that your first show?

My first official show was *Pattern Making*, my graduate collection; the show with the rocking chair was called *Social Sciences* [Spring/Summer 2016]. All my early collections were named after university subjects; I want my brand to be almost an institution that teaches people about various parts of African and South African culture. In hindsight, *Pattern Making* was quite literal: it was really about taking images – paper pattern-making – and integrating them into garments. There was this idea of tracking marks within garments, hidden details, notches turned into prints. Right after college, *Social Sciences* was basically an observation of the people on the streets in Johannesburg. There are so many hawkers here; women who sit all day in the boiling sun and cook corn on the streets. I met up with Emile [Millward, industrial designer] to create an object that was almost a complementary piece. We named it *Hawker's Rocking Chair #1* because it was inspired by these women.

That cross-disciplinary spirit also comes to fruition in your zine, *Faculty Press*.

That was born from a place of frustration, really. I am friends with so many people across disciplines – writers, photographers, other designers and makers – but they weren't getting the recognition they deserved. I had an exhibition with the British Fashion Council,[3] and six months before the exhibition I gathered all my friends and made a skeleton of what I wanted *Faculty Press* to look like. I commissioned writers to write about things in South Africa across all disciplines. It wasn't an aesthetic thing; we had really critical conversations. People have a very lazy idea about what South Africa is, so this was my way to shift perceptions. *Faculty Press* launched at Somerset House in London, and gave me the opportunity to introduce my friends to various people within the fashion industry who could give them some visibility. I got a lot of good feedback; people said that they didn't know all this was happening in South Africa.

That kind of consciousness really runs through your collections. It's almost like a signature.

One of the most important collections to me personally, for that reason, is *Home Economics* [Autumn-Winter

2018], which is about gender-based violence. I worked with the artist Phathu Nembwili and asked her to paint an image of one woman leaning into the arms of another, to express the idea that there is a war raging against women in South Africa right now, and they need one another. And I dressed scarecrows for the collection, because I see scarecrows as having a sort of duality. Although they are very fragile and vulnerable, they have this intimidating strength about them.

Your Spring-Summer 2020 *Prosopography* collection is another one of my favourites. It is inspired by the women of the Black Sash,[4] a 64-year-old organization for social justice in South Africa. It is not well-documented, so you did your own extensive interviews.

‘Image-making is such a powerful tool. I’m always trying to showcase a new type of beauty, because, for too long, it’s been white, skinny, all of those things.’

What does that research aspect add to the collection?
Creating documentation is just as important as the end product; otherwise, things like the Black Sash would be completely forgotten. Even Nelson Mandela used to say that we don’t speak about them enough. My grandmother always told me about the women of the Black Sash, so when I started really going into the research for it, I asked older people around me if they knew anyone who used to be in the organization, and I had the honour of speaking to one of them. It was the craziest thing: in the morning, she would cook for her husband and child wearing this conservative day dress, but once they left she would change into hiking boots and an anorak and go out and protest. That was my starting point: the idea of women living these dual lives, that juxtaposition. I then met the two founders of tech company Verisium in Cape Town and told them how frustrating it is that my interviews with these people and their incredible insights were kept only in my personal notes or just in my mind. They explained that they have a chip normally used for verification purposes, which we then modified so that you can tap your phone on the label and access the stories of these women, as well as really technical information: an overview of the garment, fabrication details, where it was made, and images of the hands that worked on it. There is even a physical piece of land on one of the garments, a white two-piece with a red sash painted all over. Visually, there is the connotation of blood, which was shed during that time, but the red is actually mud from a traditional healer; we mixed it with chemicals so that it wouldn’t come off, and then we applied it to the garment. So much went into that collection; so many voices informed it.

The white garment and the red sash is really an extraordinary piece; it’s incredibly charged. How do you connect to spirituality and rituals?
I grew up Christian, so I am quite spiritual in that sense, but I am also from a very superstitious family. The idea of *tokoloshes*[5] is something I strongly believe in. But in terms of classic spirituality, I am Christian because I was raised in a Christian household.

You mentioned your mother earlier, and how she understands this idea of role playing, of the ability of fashion to reveal and conceal. I love that.
My mom really does play certain roles, depending on how she is dressed. When she wants to impress, she will walk into a room with a really beautiful, well-cut suit and be quite serious. You might see her as standoffish, but she is quite a shy person, and the only way she can get through it is by having that sort of allure. My mum and I are essentially the same: we don’t have a lot of words when we are speaking to people. She can both conceal and reveal herself all at once.

You can see that concealment so much in *Counter Intelligence*, your latest collection, where you chose the theme of espionage during apartheid.[6]
It is almost a second part to *Prosopography*. The women of the Black Sash were an open secret; they weren’t hiding out all that much. Then there were women who had to be secret no matter what. It’s always been a fascination for me, this idea of espionage. During the lockdown, I read this book by Jonathan Ancer called *Betrayal* about the secret lives of apartheid spies. It was fascinating to hear these women’s tales of what they had to do to pass information for or against the government. But I felt like it wasn’t enough just to read the book; I really wanted to interview some of these women, to get a first-hand account of what they were feeling at the time and what led them to spy on their country. One of the spies that I spoke to – I can only call her Miles for now, she doesn’t want to be publicly named – is from Kimberley, the small mining town where I’m from. She sent me a photo of herself that I printed on a white cotton twill fabric; her face is on one of the shirt dresses.

I wanted to ask you about Olivia Forsyth. How did you interact with her?
Unlike the other spies who went into hiding, Olivia just came out completely. I interacted with her through e-mail. She initially spied for the government, but then defected to the ANC,[7] becoming a double agent. It was not something she fell into or was led into; she called the head of intelligence in South Africa, Craig Williamson,[8] and said: ‘I want to become a spy.’ She was placed as a student at Rhodes University to befriend people and start sending back information to the government about underground ANC groups, but she actually defected to the ANC. A lot of people say maybe that’s the excuse she gave after everything came out, and that this was her story to redeem herself. I asked if she could please scan some of her fingerprints and send them to me so I could print them on a white dress. That’s how I implemented them into the physical collection. Quite a few of the spies feel guilty about what they did. Their spying was responsible for people going to prison and for being seriously hurt. It was heartbreaking to hear the account of someone who had been on the receiving end. She had befriended one of the spies at Rhodes University, and she described this raid that came out of nowhere. Everyone was rounded up and put in prison. At the trial, a spy who the day before had worn tie-dye shirts and loose, baggy jeans, walked into the courtroom in a suit, looking like a completely different person. I was interested in that level of deception, and how they had to completely change who they were to assimilate into the group.

‘You know, in Milan towards the end of last year, I was told by a white designer that I only won the LVMH prize because I’m black.’

In the collection, you subvert conventional design features, like replacing polka dots with Forsyth’s fingerprints. It’s very much connected to camouflage – it’s implicit in the design – and it also combines your roles as a historian and as a fashion designer.
More and more with the collections I find myself documenting major parts of our culture that are overlooked. When I was in Milan, a lady walked up to me and expressed her disappointment that my clothes weren’t African enough. I told her that the clothes I do are more authentic to Africans in South Africa, as they document real people’s stories and real histories, not stereotypical prints. People really gravitate to this as it’s such a new history: a reality that people had no idea even existed. I love using trompe-l’oeil because you have to come closer and interact with the product quite intimately to pick up on it. The parka has a polygraph test design, and on top of it is written the code for a virus that would track all your movements if it was to infect your computer. I wanted smart references to surveillance and espionage to be put into the collection in a way that’s still wearable. At the end of the day, you have to feel incredible about what you’re wearing; that’s why subtlety is really important.

Do you want to bring in history from different contexts or will South Africa remain the basis of your work?
That’s a very interesting question. I don’t think it will just be limited to South Africa. I am still growing, and I want to experience new things and interrogate new things as I grow. That being said, I feel there is a relatability to all the collections I do across the board. Even if *Counter Intelligence,* this most recent collection, was about South African female spies, I think people are fascinated by the idea of spies in general.

Do you have any unrealized projects or dreams?
This might be years from now, but having some sort of a school would be one of my ultimate dreams. It would probably start really small and possibly grow into an institution of some kind. I have such a deep respect for education because of how it can change societies. I am already sort of involved with schools in terms of donations, because I had the privilege of meeting so many brands.

The LVMH Prize is unique in the fashion world. It is almost like a genius award; it’s a lot of money, but at the same time, it is also about structural support and mentorship. In that sense, it’s a school, giving young designers access to business skills. How did winning it change your life?
Apart from the obvious benefits of a large sum of money, what’s incredible about it is that they assign you a mentor and introduce you to all these people in the fashion space. You know, essentially, that is what our industry is: it really is about who you know and your access to them. So to have direct contact to people you otherwise would spend years

trying to reach is really incredible. It really has changed my life. A lot of people didn't know who I was, really, right up to the LVMH Prize. People are still just finding out who I am. The visibility it has given me has been incredible.

What are you working on now?
I'm working on a lot of projects that are quite social-facing, with a lot of social responsibility. South Africa's not an easy place and a lot of communities have it quite hard, especially school children. Covid-19 has completely totalled education, which was already on its last legs. I'm doing projects that try to assist in any which way they can. That's actually the reason why I'm back in my hometown. I recently asked Adidas if we could collaborate on masks that could be donated to school children, as a lot of them didn't actually have proper masks. I have been producing them for the past month, so I'm here to give quite a few of them away. I designed them and I asked Adidas to come on board as a collaborator, in terms of distribution and the production resources they can provide. They are in this wetsuit fabric and they have these straps that hang down. The pattern is a combination of the Adidas trefoil and my sisterhood emblem. It's the same sort of idea as the Kitchen Table Parka – that vinyl, step-and-repeat pattern that I do quite often. Right now, they are just available in South Africa as the need for it was hyper-local. I just produced them and I'm now starting to donate them.

In general, I was wondering if you see a more politically active future for fashion. Fashion is almost like a top-down dictatorship of schedule. Designers have spoken about the absurdity of this velocity of doing four shows a year and how more and more things in-between become accelerated. So, this rhythm, the slowness, a more politically activated future – do you think about breaking out of the rhythm of these fashion shows? And in terms of society, of bringing design into society?
I realize that I'm from a completely different system. Any designer who works outside the 'global north' will be from another fashion system. I realize that the more I produce collections, the more I'm pushed to produce. There are such extreme differences between Europe and South Africa. I've had to split our online store into two: South Africa and then the rest of the world. What's affordable in Europe and in South Africa is so different, so I have this balancing act to make sure that the cultures and the people here can actually afford the clothes that they have inspired. This order season, there have been so many orders, but I had to say no to a lot of them, even to critical stores that I love, because I can't put pressure on my production. I have to think about slow growth. I'm growing as our industry here grows, which is still sort of infantile in a lot of ways. I'm in a context where I see quite a few extremes just from being here – I've seen poverty up close, and what HIV can do to communities – and with my brand, I want to be able, in my own small way, to assist and address that. At the end of the day, we do fashion, but I want to solve some things as I go. When doing these masks or any other projects, there has to be some kind of a social-responsibility element attached.

That's really important, because it's a very, very different context for the industry. Racial injustice in South Africa is something that you have spoken about before. How do you address that in your collections?
We've been out of the old regime for 25 or so years but the racial inequalities are still extreme. There are so many barriers to entry for Black people, let alone Black creative people in South Africa. We are in a new democracy that's still figuring itself out. That being said, I think that image-making is still a powerful tool. I'm always trying to showcase a new type of beauty, because, for the longest time, it's been white, skinny, all of those things. Image-making can help recalibrate people's minds to a more inclusive standard of beauty. Now more than ever, there's this conversation about Black people in fashion. On the one hand, I am a Black designer and I use my experiences and my culture and heritage to inform the work that I do. But on the other hand, in instances like that, the word 'Black' sits next the word 'designer' and is used to nullify the talents being spoken about. You know, in Milan towards the end of last year, I was told by a white designer that I only won the prize because I'm Black. I'm doing my thing down here, but whenever I go to that side, there are instances like that one that show you how inherently racist fashion still is. There is an amnesia about Black people's contributions to fashion, historically.

> **'What's affordable in Europe and in South Africa is so different. It's a balancing act to make sure people here can actually afford the clothes they've inspired.'**

Like the historian Eric Hobsbawm[9] said, we need to protest against forgetting. Are there any South African designers from previous generations who we should remember more?
So many massive contributions from South African designers were never picked up because we operate outside of 'fashion'. Fashion is still such a tight-knit community, and a lot of people, especially from far-flung places, can be overlooked. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, especially, designers like Marianne Fassler[10] and Black Coffee[11] were doing such incredible, conceptual work here that was outside of the stereotypical idea of 'African fashion'. Clive Rundle[12] was largely considered the Margiela of Africa, but no one really knows about him. Our big challenge is inclusion, in general, into the fashion system.

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[1] The Sotho (or Basotho) and the Tswana – Southern African ethnic groups, each of around 7 million people – are the majority populations of Lesotho and Botswana, respectively, although higher numbers of both live in South Africa, where they comprise around a fifth of the country's citizens. The languages spoken by both groups, Sotho and Tswana (or Setswana), are closely related and mutually intelligible.

[2] The *mokorotlo* is a conical straw hat traditionally worn by the Sotho ethnic group; it appears on Lesotho's national flag and the country's number plates. The patterned, woollen Basotho blanket became part of everyday clothing in Lesotho in the 1870s when the country's king made a deal with a Scottish textile manufacturer following a shortage of the animal skins used to make the traditional cape or kaross.

[3] In 2019, Magugu won the International Fashion Showcase, co-organized by the British Fashion Council. The event included an exhibition, *Brave New Worlds: The Changing Landscape of Fashion*, that ran 11-24 February 2019 at Somerset House, London.

[4] The Women's Defence of the Constitution League, founded in 1955, became known as the Black Sash after the ribbons worn by its members as a sign of their mourning for the South African constitution. A non-violent, white, all-women organization, the Black Sash led demonstrations and undertook advocacy work and was seen as proof of white resistance to the apartheid system. Following the move to majority rule in 1994, the Black Sash became an NGO with an emphasis on education.

[5] In Zulu folklore, a *tokoloshe* is a hairy, blind and deadly nocturnal troublemaker. Created to order by a witch doctor, using a corpse, a red-hot poker, and a special shrinking powder, the creature can bite off toes and make itself invisible by swallowing a stone. It is, however, hamstrung by its diminutive size: a brick under each bed leg is known to be an effective defence.

[6] Apartheid, which means 'separateness' in Afrikaans, was an almost 50-year system of racist, segregationist policies and institutions in South Africa and what is now Namibia. Reserving all political, economic and social power to a white elite, it denied non-whites basic amenities, education, property rights, and healthcare; in 1981, for example, South Africa had one doctor for every 330 white people, but one for every 91,000 non-white people. Apartheid was violently enforced on the non-white population, which made up more than 80% of the country's population, or more than 32 million people in 1994, when wide-ranging reforms brought the system to end.

[7] Founded as a non-violent organization in the early 20th century, the African National Congress (ANC), was the main political party opposed to apartheid. In 1961, Nelson Mandela co-founded the ANC's military wing – uMkhonto we Sizwe or Spear of the Nation – in response to the killing by police of 69 peaceful protestors in the township of Sharpeville in 1960. Immediately banned by South Africa's apartheid government, it was eventually integrated into the South African army in 1994. While the ANC has ruled South Africa since the country's first free elections in 1994, it was only removed from the US terrorism watchlist in 2008.

[8] Craig Williamson is a former spy and major in the South African Police, notorious for an international campaign of bombings, assassinations, burglaries, kidnappings, and arms dealing throughout the 1980s. His targets included ANC representatives and peaceful activists, their families and associates living in cities around the world, including Maputo, London, Paris, Brussels and Stockholm. Williamson has been strongly implicated in the 1986 assassination of Olof Palme, the Swedish prime minister, whose shooting in the street remains the country's most notorious unsolved murder.

[9] British historian Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) was born in Alexandria, grew up in Germany and Vienna and moved to the UK in 1933. Describing the role of the historian, Hobsbawm, a lifelong Marxist, said in 2009: 'If you forget what happened in the past, you simply have to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.'

[10] Marianne Fassler and her brand Leopard Frock, based in Johannesburg suburb Saxonwold, have been leading lights of South African fashion for more than four decades. In 1976, at the height of apartheid, she outraged the authoritarian establishment by featuring a black model in a runway show.

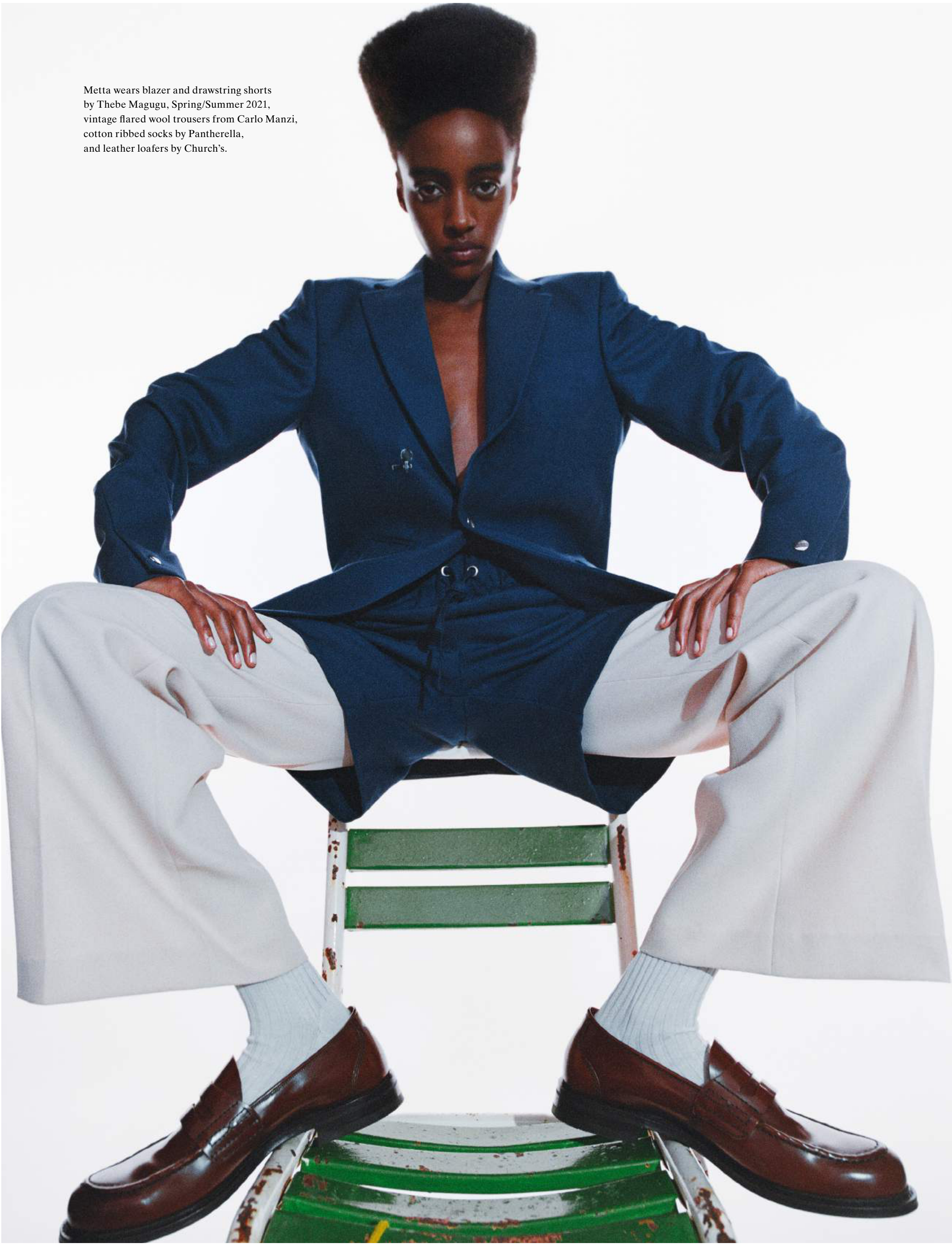
[11] Formed by South African designer Jacques van der Watt in 1998, Black Coffee is one of the country's most-celebrated brands, twice winning best label at the South African Fashion Awards.

[12] One of the forefathers of contemporary South African fashion, Clive Rundle opened his first store in 1988 and showed his first collection in Paris the following year.

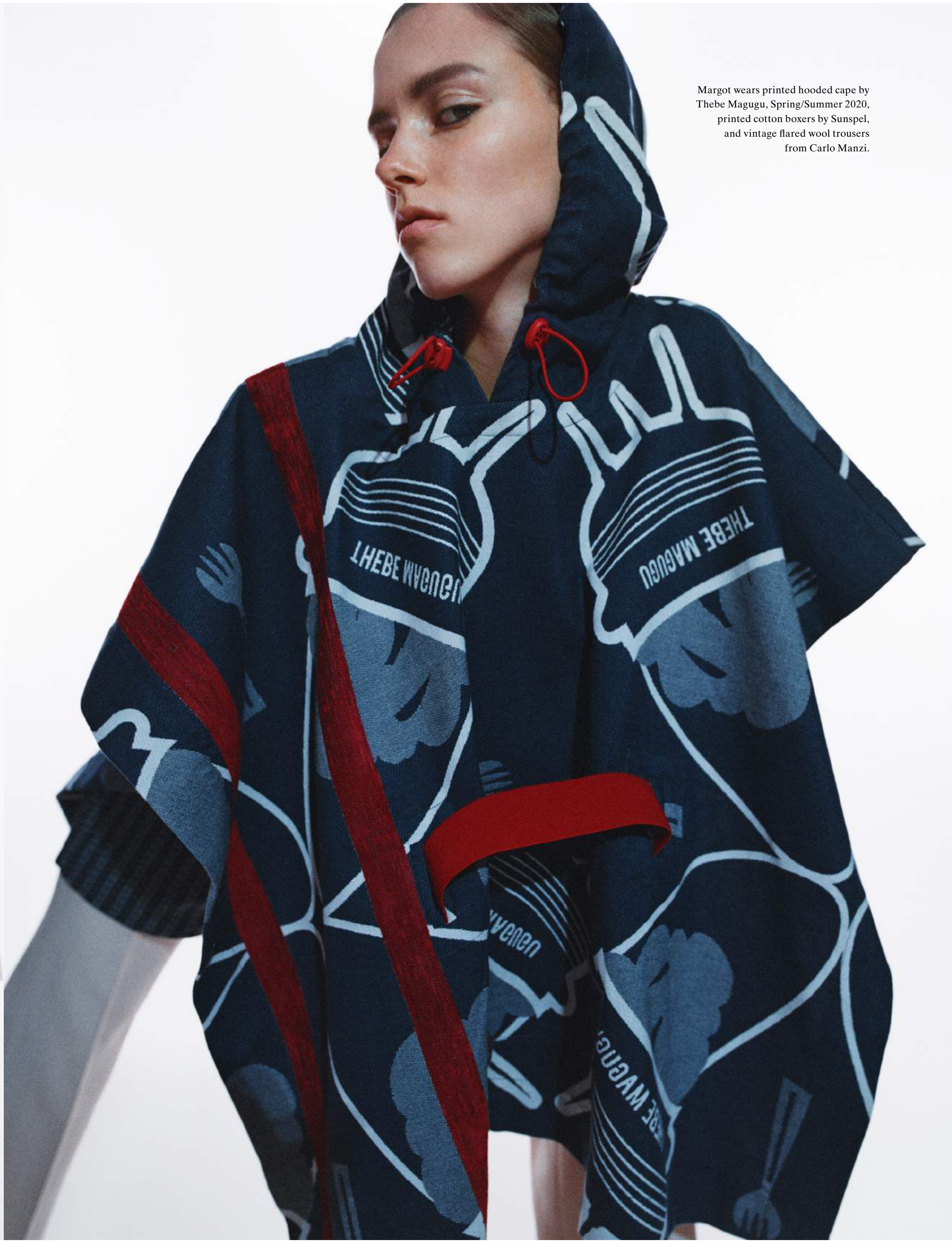
Metta wears shirt with maxi-logo by Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2021, cotton boxers by Hanro, and vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi.

Metta wears coat with pleated side cape
and pleated printed skirt by
Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2020.

Margot wears printed shirt by
Thebe Magugu × 24S.com, Spring/Summer 2019,
overall shorts by Thebe Magugu, Autumn/Winter 2020,
vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi,
stylist's own tie.



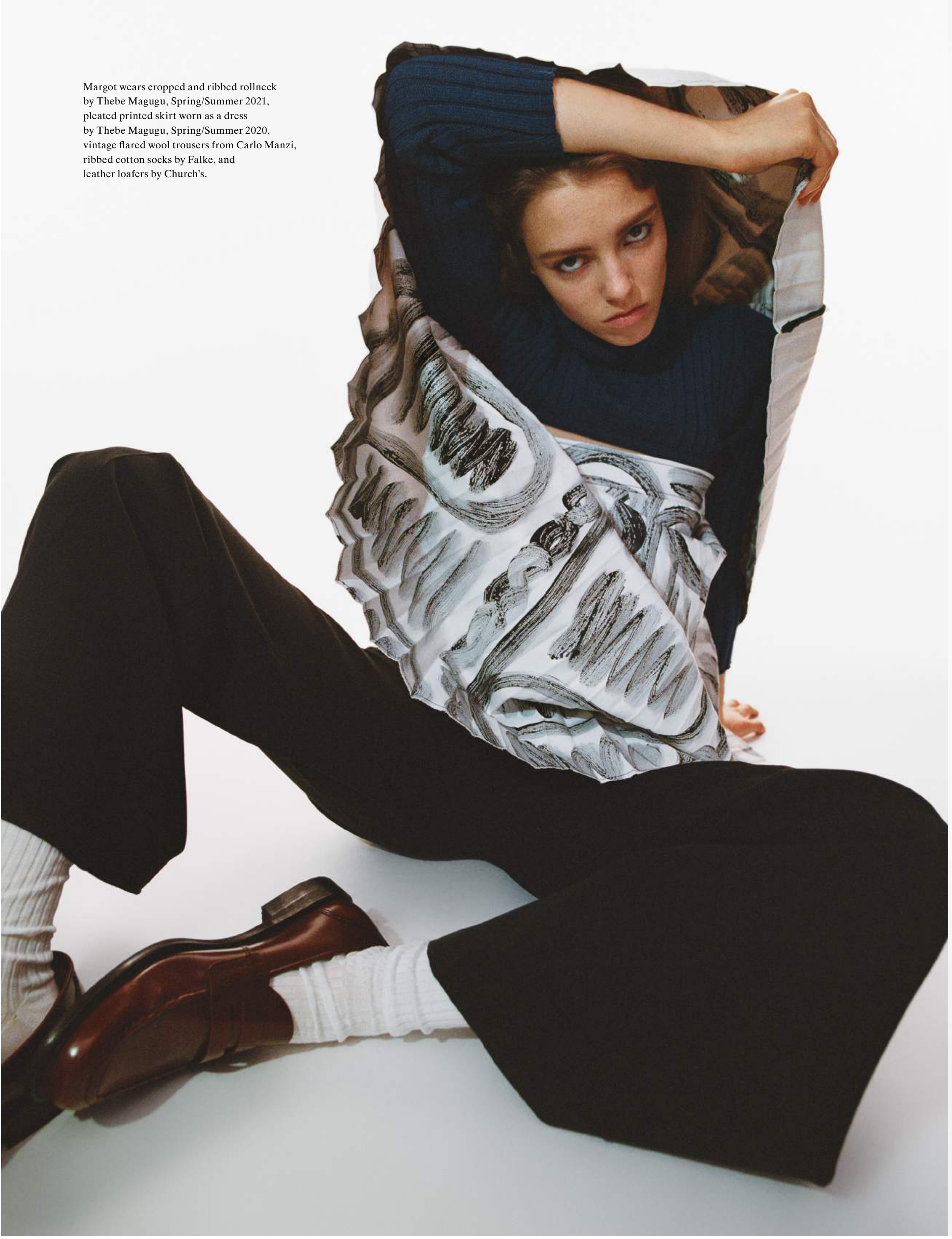
Metta wears blazer and drawstring shorts
by Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2021,
vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi,
cotton ribbed socks by Pantherella,
and leather loafers by Church's.



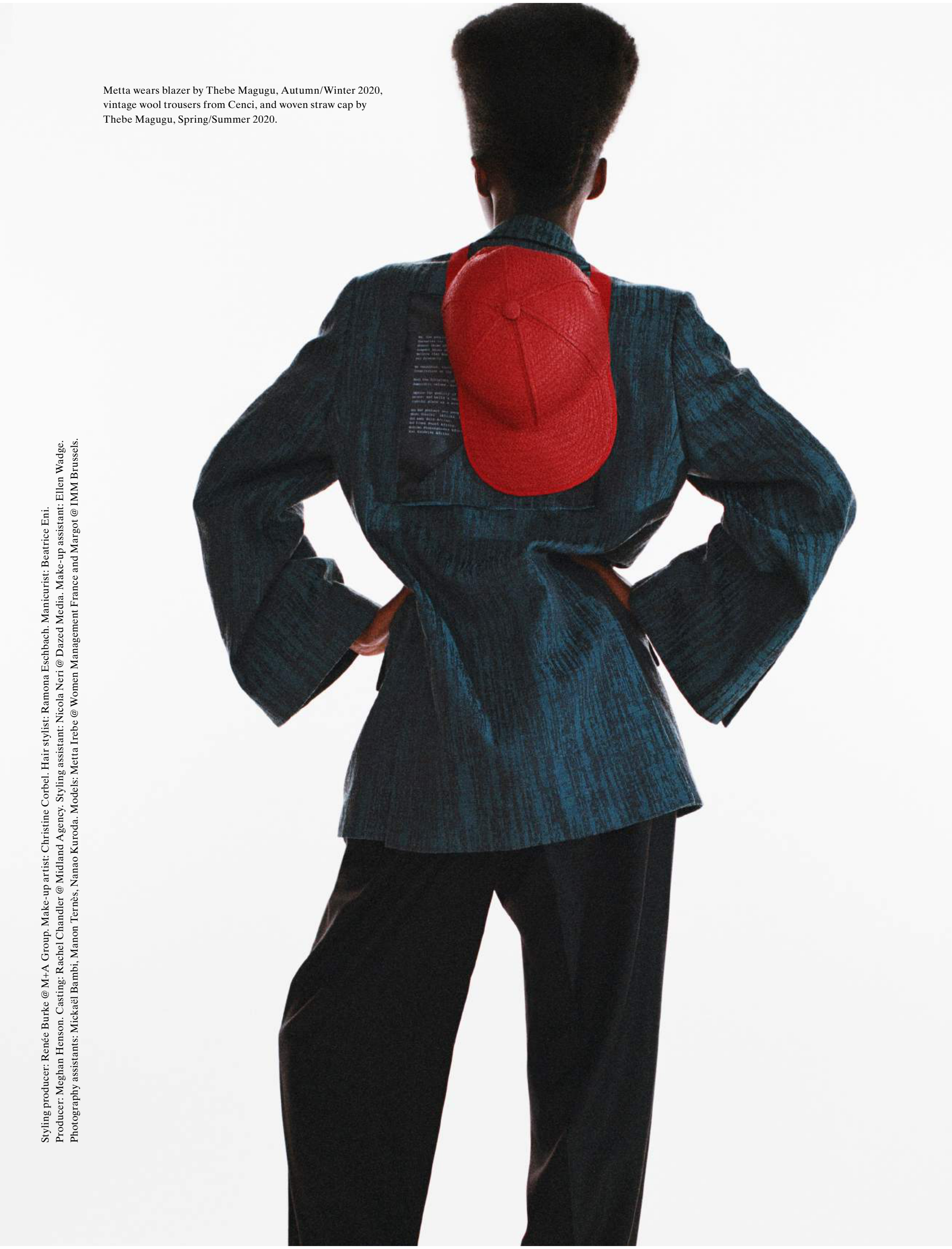
Margot wears printed hooded cape by
Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2020,
printed cotton boxers by Sunspel,
and vintage flared wool trousers
from Carlo Manzi.

Margot wears printed shirt by Thebe Magugu × 24S.com,
Spring/Summer 2019, knit sleeves with feathers by
Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2021,
overall shorts by Thebe Magugu, Autumn/Winter 2020,
and vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi.

Metta wears printed dress and tie by
Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2021,
polka-dot cotton boxers by Sunspel,
vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi,
ribbed cotton socks by Pantherella,
and leather loafers by Church's.

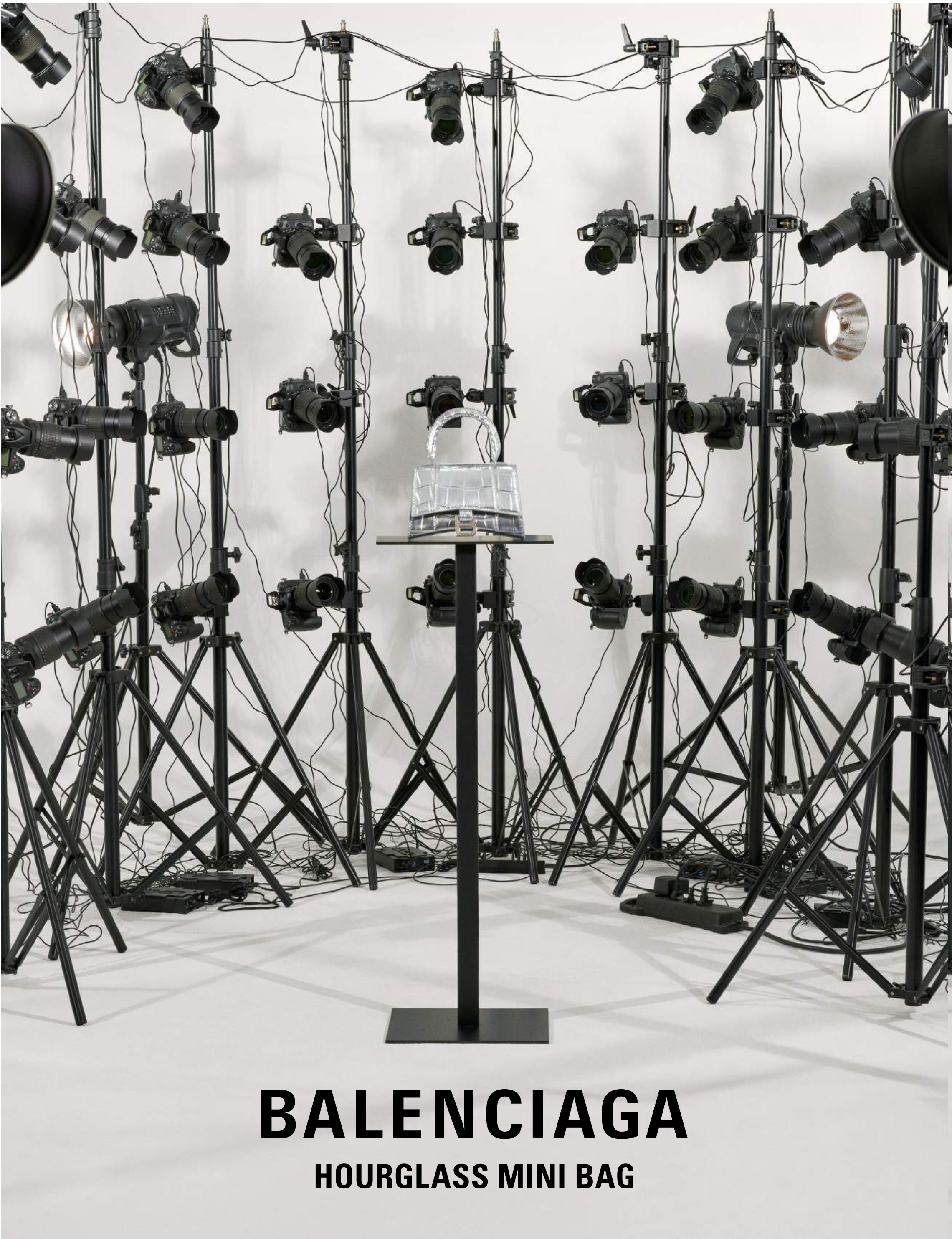


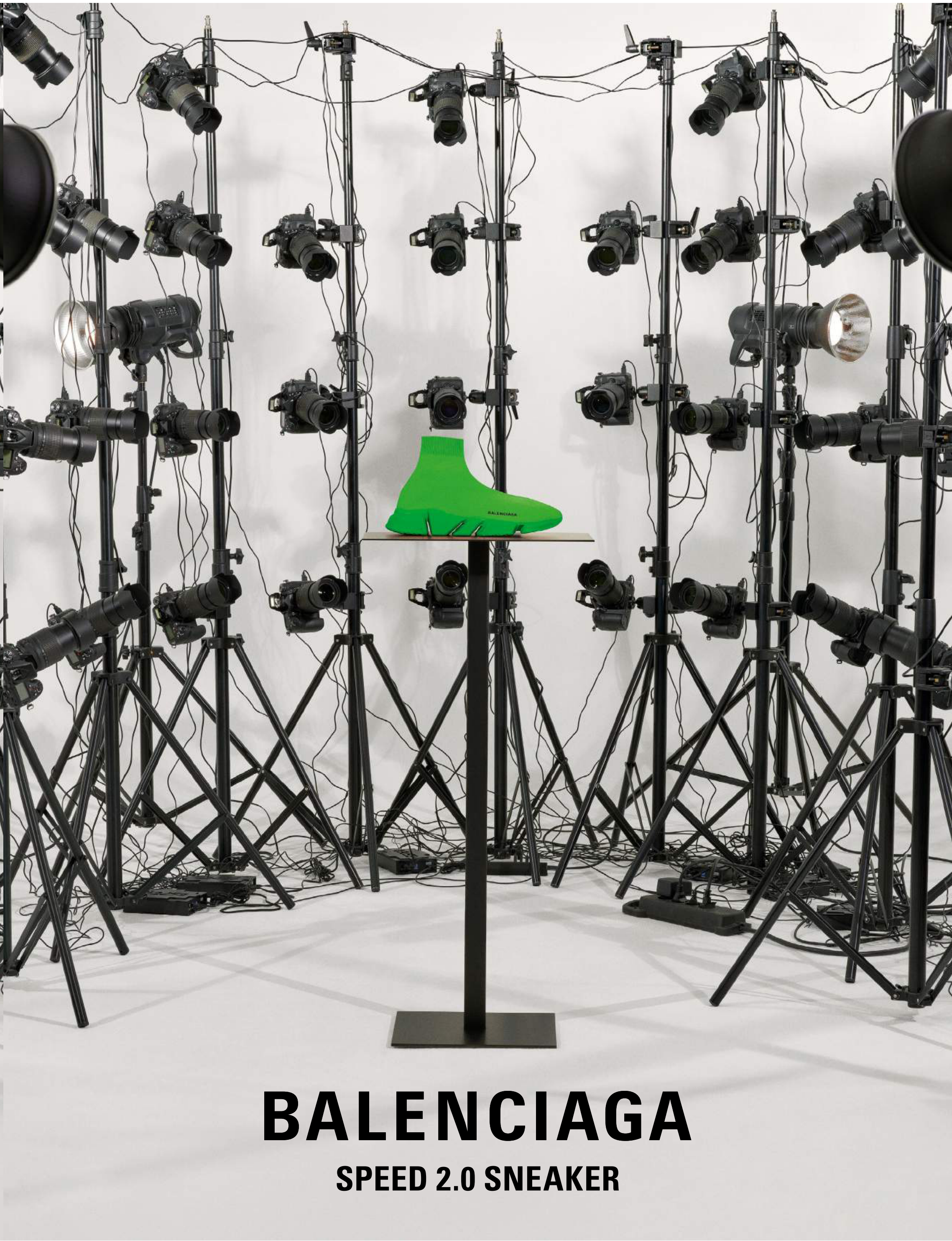
Margot wears cropped and ribbed rollneck
by Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2021,
pleated printed skirt worn as a dress
by Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2020,
vintage flared wool trousers from Carlo Manzi,
ribbed cotton socks by Falke, and
leather loafers by Church's.



Metta wears blazer by Thebe Magugu, Autumn/Winter 2020,
vintage wool trousers from Cenci, and woven straw cap by
Thebe Magugu, Spring/Summer 2020.

Styling producer: Renée Burke @ M+A Group. Make-up artist: Christine Corbel. Hair stylist: Ramona Eschbach. Manicurist: Beatrice Eni.
Producer: Meghan Henson. Casting: Rachel Chandler @ Midland Agency. Styling assistant: Nicola Neri @ Dazed Media. Make-up assistant: Ellen Wadge.
Photography assistants: Mickaël Bambi, Manon Ternès, Nanao Kuroda. Models: Metta Irebe @ Women Management France and Margot @ IMM Brussels.

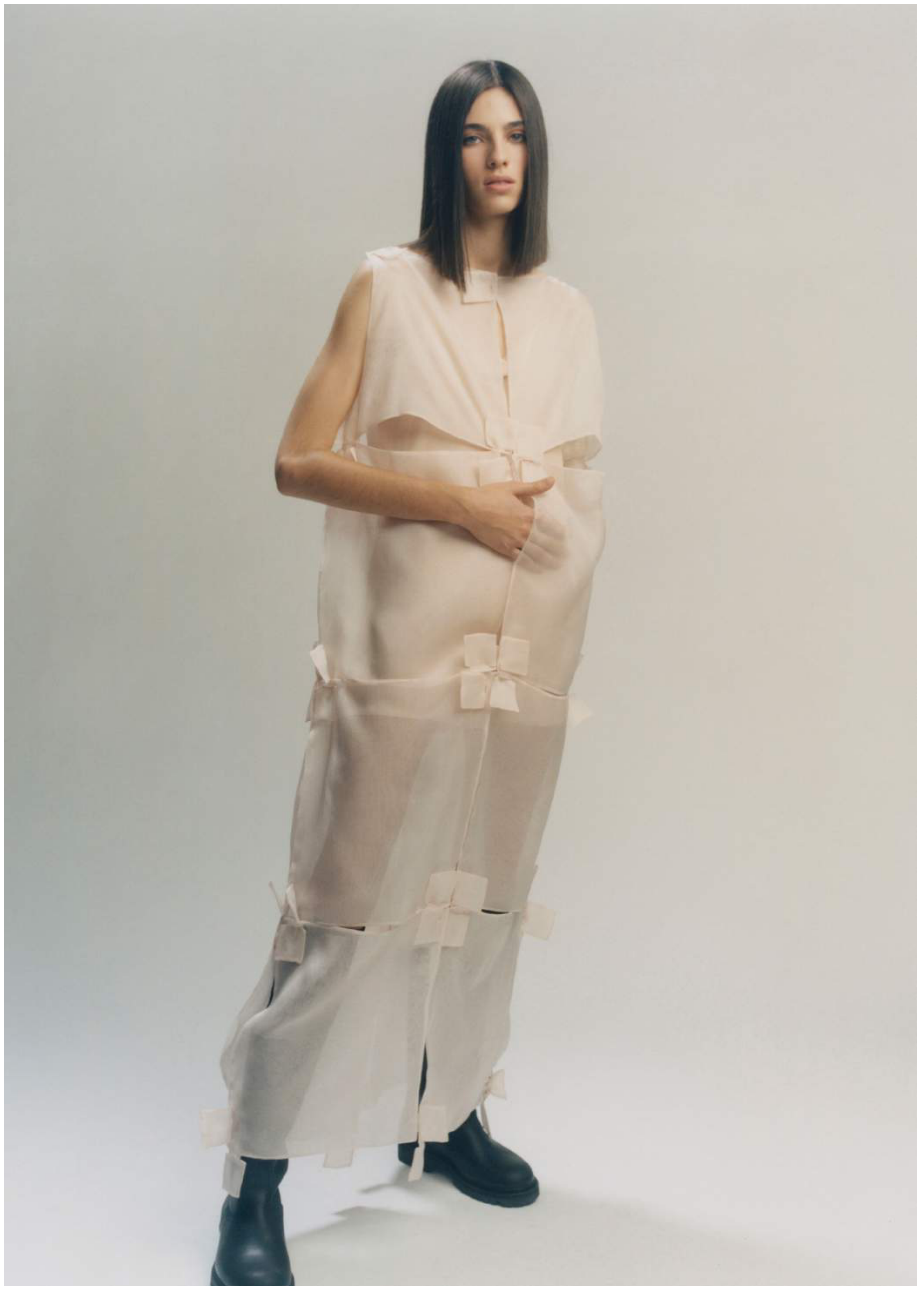

BALENCIAGA
HOURGLASS MINI BAG

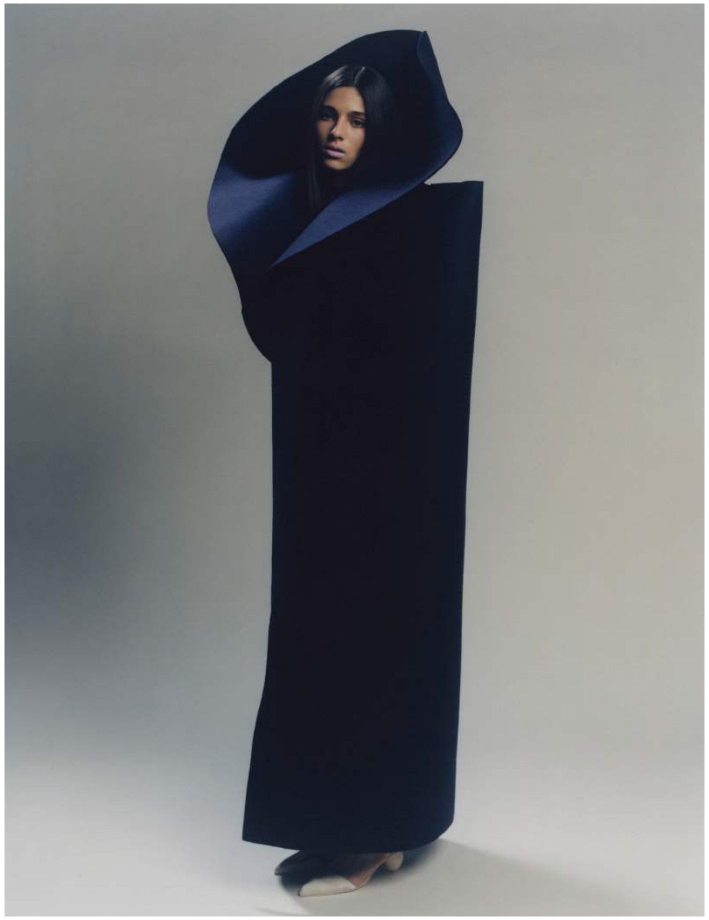

BALENCIAGA
SPEED 2.0 SNEAKER

‘What would be the point of me doing anything other than Adeline André?’

Celebrating 40 years of Paris couture’s discreet radical.

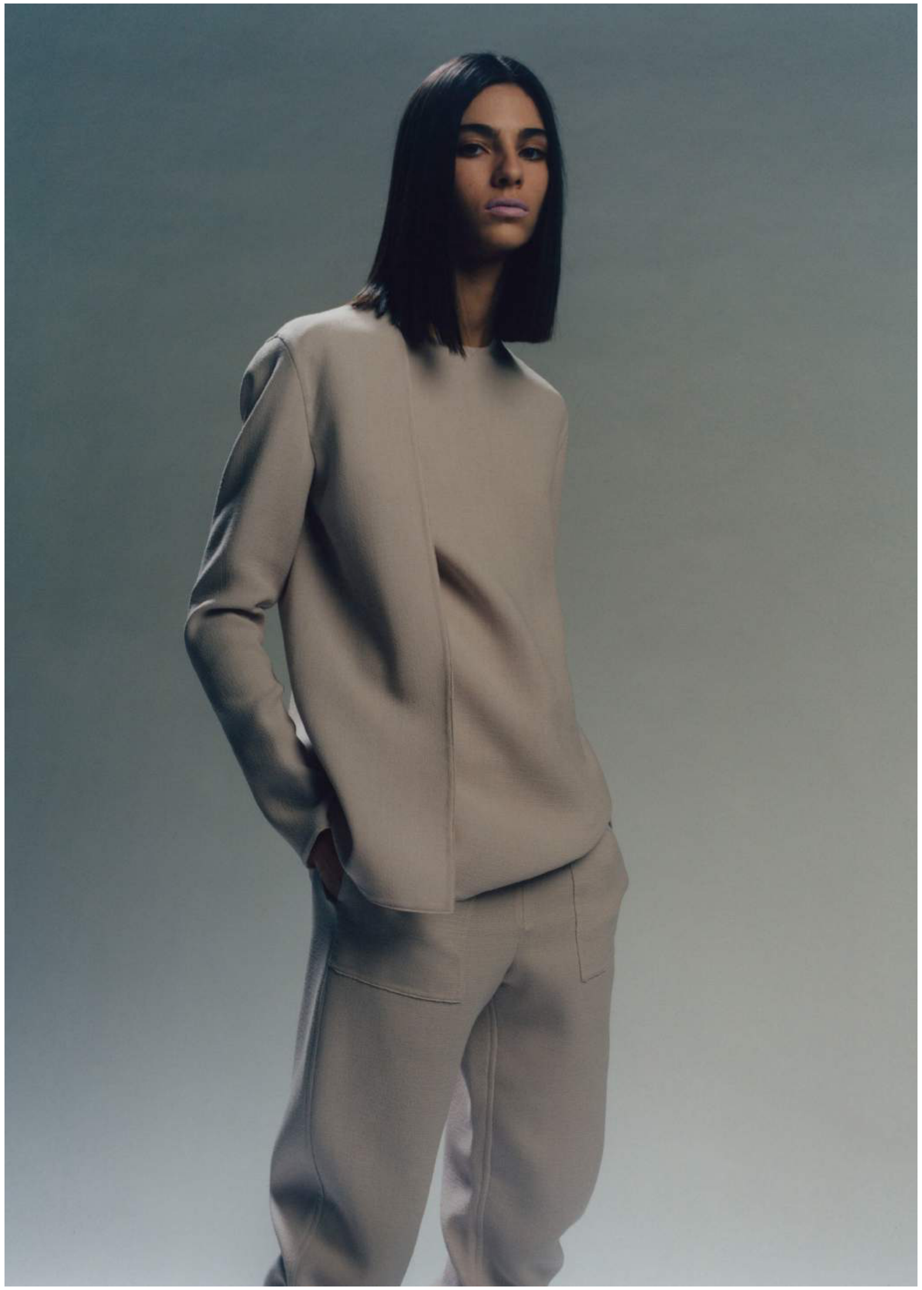
By Olivier Saillard
Photographs by Maxime Imbert
Styling by Camille Bidault-Waddington

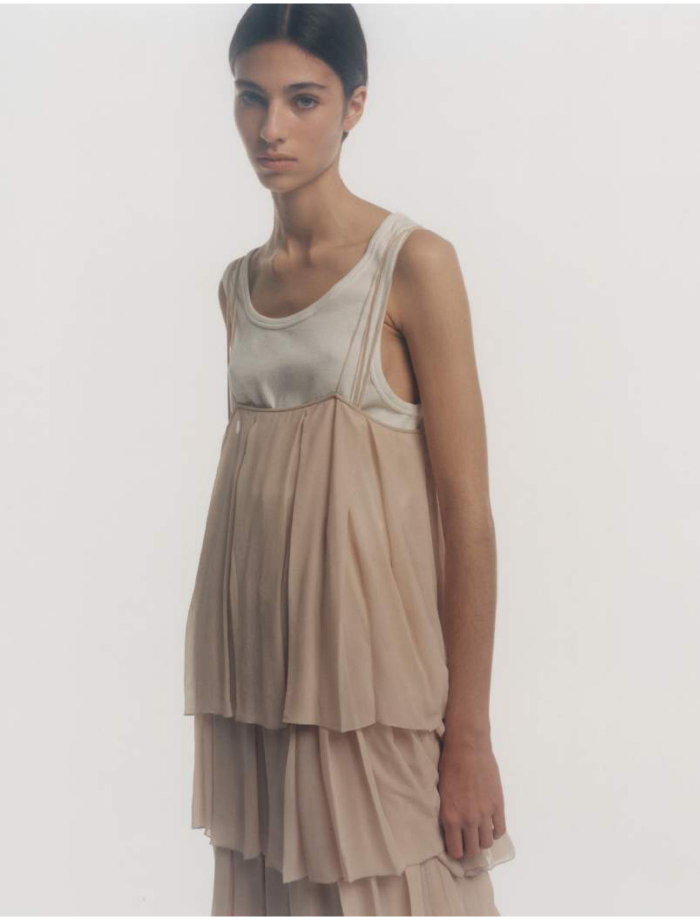




Opposite page:
Loli wears ‘Removable’ dress in silk organza by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2018,
with wool socks by Falke and boots by Doursoux.

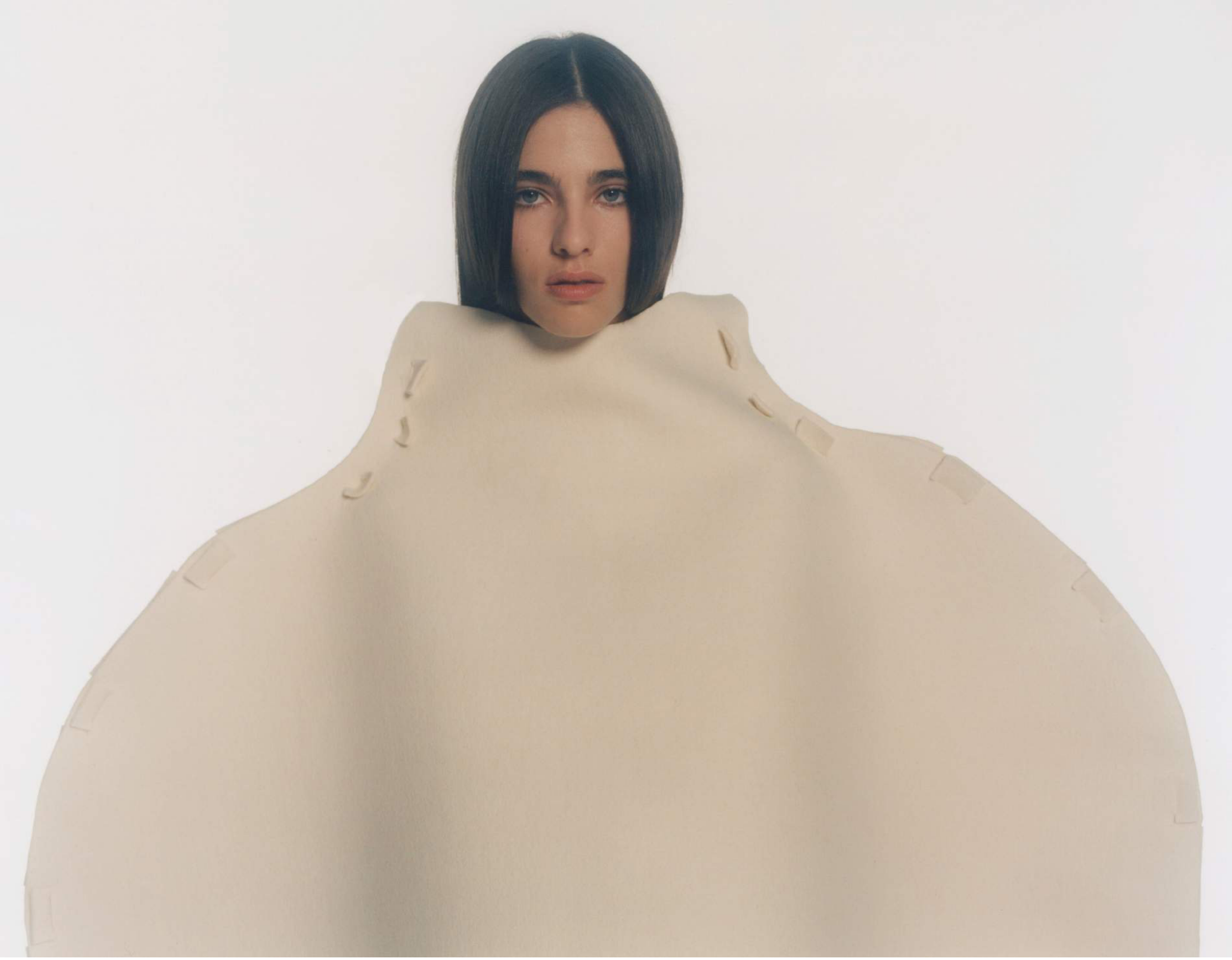
This page:
‘Lune’ housecoat in wool felt by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2017, and
‘Marcher sur des œufs’ shoes by Adeline André and István Dohar, Haute Couture, January 1998.



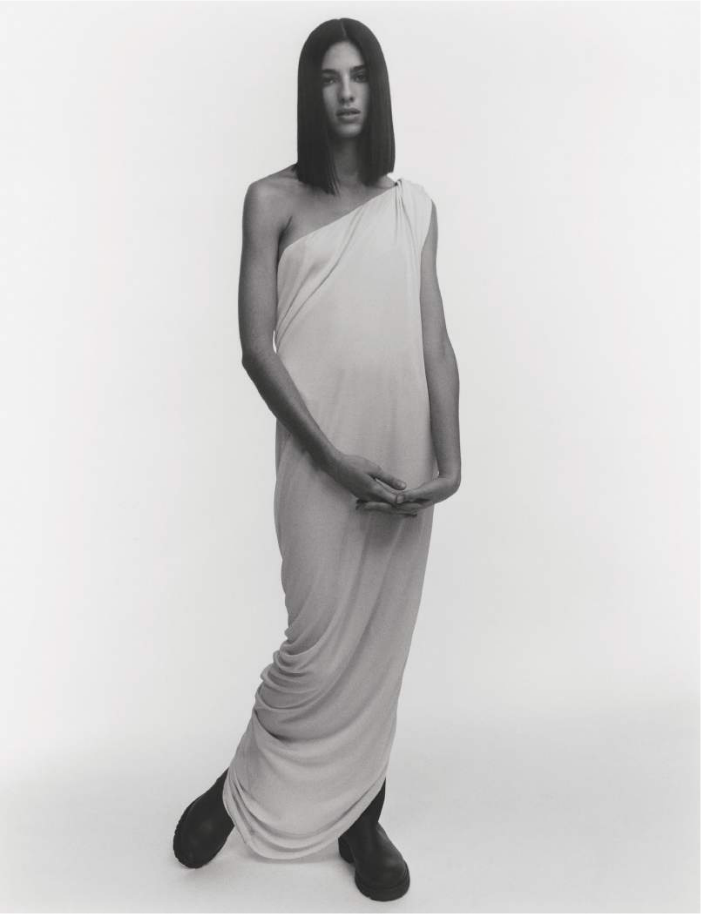


Opposite page:
Loli wears ‘three-sleeve-hole’ suit by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2016.

This page:
‘Sextuple’ dress in silk by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 1999.

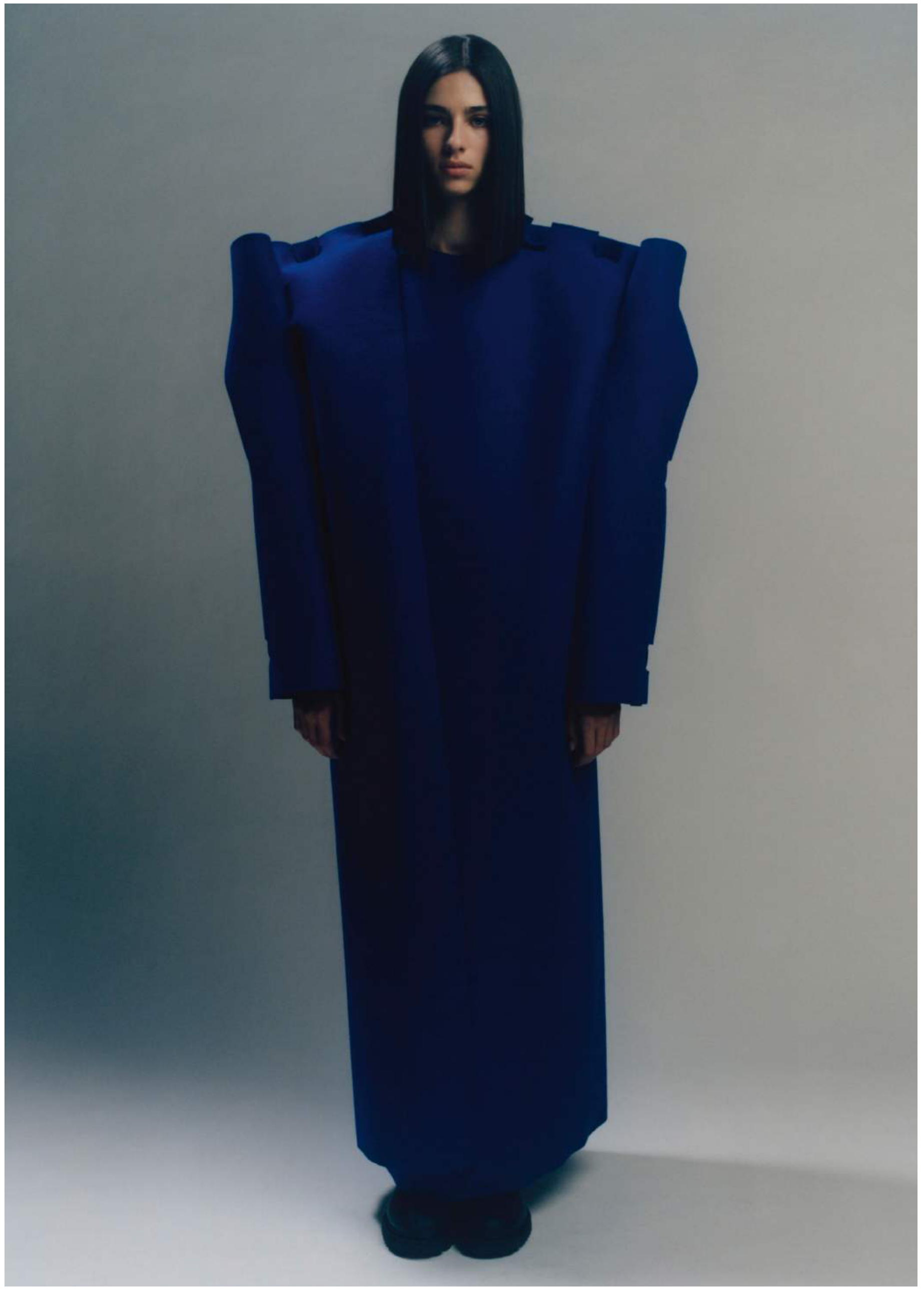


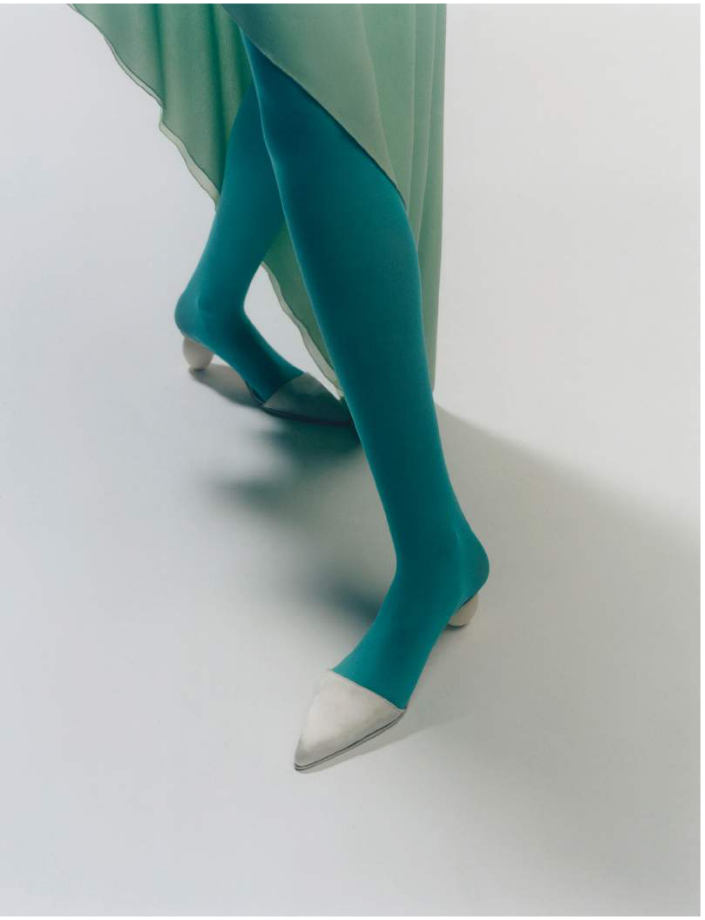
‘Igloo’ coat in wool felt by Adeline André,
Haute Couture, July 2017.



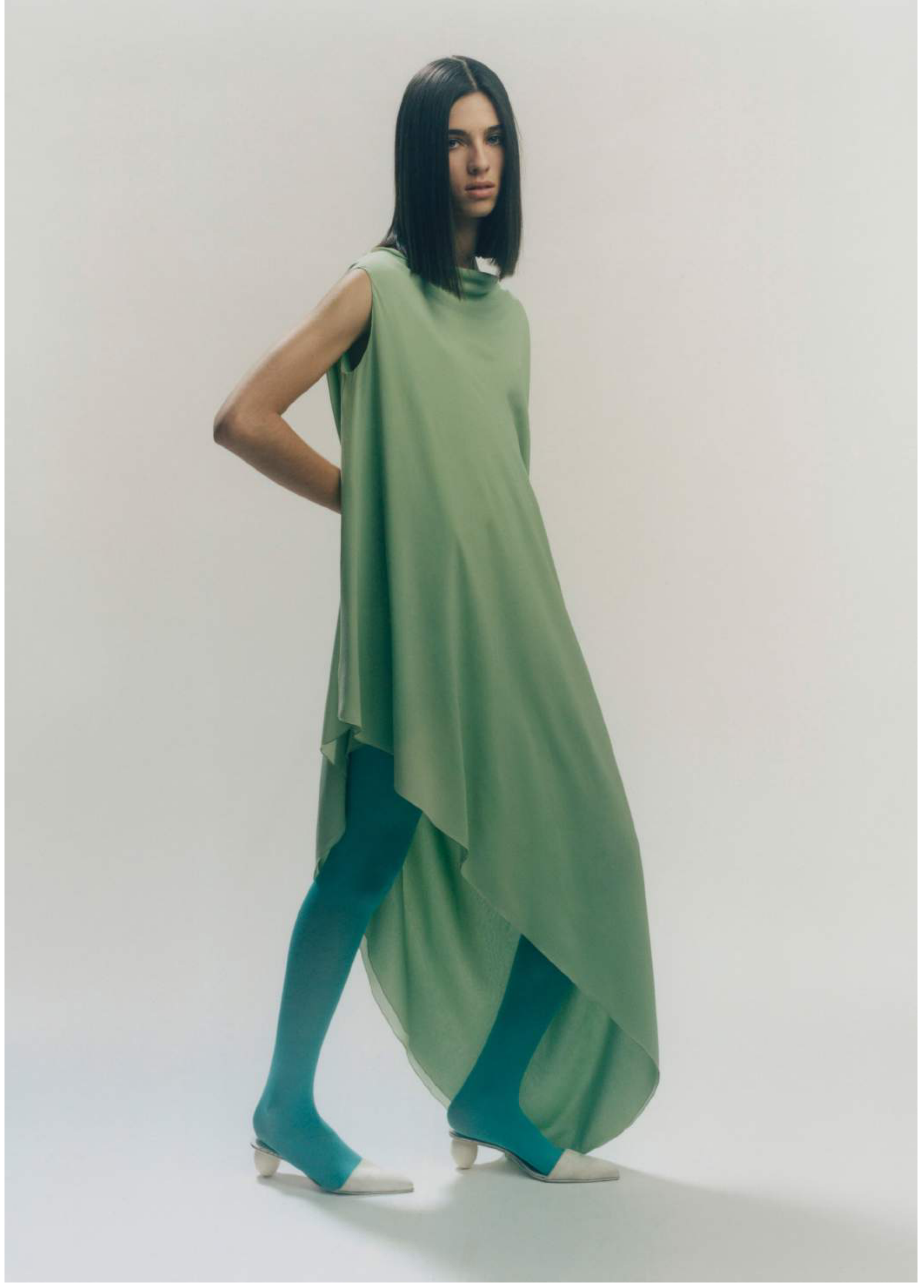
This page:
Draped dress by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2017,
with boots by Doursoux.

Opposite page:
'Three-sleeve-hole' housecoat in wool felt by Adeline André,
Haute Couture, July 2017, with boots by Doursoux.





Bias-cut dress in silk by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2017 and
'Marcher sur des œufs' shoes by Adeline André, Haute Couture, January 1998.



'I cannot judge fashion, whether yesterday's or today's, based upon my taste…' Adeline André doesn't always finish her sentences and it is in the silence of those ellipses that you suspect she is making excuses for the arrogant fashion world. She has navigated it alone and one day it may understand that it has always been dominated, if not ruled by her.

Sitting on a stool, her legs crossed, dressed in one of her celebrated 'three-sleeve-hole' blouses and a pair of plain white trousers, Adeline André welcomes visitors with movements of her head that feel like vanishing points and evasions. She has always been able to escape. The trajectory of her work has never been corrupted by any passing trend or the rise and fall of fashions. Since the 1980s, her gracious dresses, tailored in handkerchief chiffon and imbued with her carefully chosen colours, have stood apart from fashion's overarching timeline. Both modern and classic – like all masterpieces – they owe their elegance to a Madeleine Vionnet-like refinement, but set themselves apart with a post-punk simplicity.

When she first arrived in Paris in the early 1970s, Adeline André worked nights in a convenience store and would devour science fiction.

Her work is timeless and her own look is also from elsewhere: her round, Modigliani-like eyes, and her lab-assistant orange hair make her appear like a creation from the future. When she first arrived in Paris, Adeline worked nights in a convenience store and would devour science fiction. Her radical uniforms could still make her the heroine of those tales of other worlds. Back then, the young artists Pierre & Gilles turned to Adeline to handle the styling and clothes design that were key to them turning the Paris in-crowd into kitsch martyrs and saints. Alongside Maud Molyneux, the much-missed transgender journalist suffocated by salon couture, with Edwige Belmore, official queen of Parisian punks, and accompanying Elli and Jacno, musicians and creators of pop music *à la française*, Adeline André was one of those people who magazines at the time dubbed 'modern young people'.

Was she ever really aware of that? Her choices seem to contradict both the eras she has crossed and other designers' trajectories. Nothing seems to affect Adeline, a person for whom the terms artistic director or visionary simply do not fit. Adeline is an author, a fashion author, and her poems are her clothes.

'What would be the point of me doing anything other than Adeline André?' she asks, astonished, in front of another of these journalists who seem incapable of recognizing her true worth. Just as you would no more ask Sonia Delaunay to paint a different style to her own, it would be out of the question to corrupt the designer and push her to create anything other than Adeline André.

Olivier Saillard: Adeline, what was your family like growing up?
Adeline André: My father worked in finance; my mother was a voracious reader and extremely attached to our education. We used to pretend that our family was a sixteenth Scottish and a sixteenth Copt, but far from those foreign climes, we are actually genuine sedentary Parisians, attached to Chatou[1] where I grew up and later the 11th and 17th arrondissements in Paris.

What did you study?
I lived in London for a while where I studied drawing, and then I began directly in the second year at the École de la Chambre Syndicale[2] in Paris. We were taught prototype making and cutting techniques there. I also attended Salvador Dalí's drawing classes. This was in the early 1970s. I remember going through the telephone directory to find the names of fashion designers who interested me and then calling them and setting up meetings. That was what happened with Dorothée Bis, which was run by Élie and Jacqueline Jacobson;[3] they bought several designs from me back then.

What do you now see as your fundamental experience from that time?
Without any doubt it was the time I was lucky enough to spend with Marc Bohan, who was then at Christian Dior.[4] I had contacted the head of personnel at the time and when I didn't hear back, I rather brazenly decided to contact Marc Bohan directly. His secretary very kindly organized a meeting with him and when he looked through my designs, he pointed to a series of sketches of bags, jewellery and accessories. He liked them so much that he hired me for his studio. You have to remember that at the time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, haute couture was absolutely not a sought-after discipline. It was seen as really old-fashioned; the young treated it with disdain. Marc Bohan himself used to say that haute couture was often more about performing orthopaedics: our main role was adapting the clothes to our clients' bodies and shapes, which were completely different to the models'!

Despite this faded image, that period was a genuine opportunity for me and real chance to learn about everything. We were only a few assistants – both men and women – locked in a studio shared by Marc Bohan and Philippe Guibourgé,[5] his partner and collaborator. It was a veritable beehive. We were involved in every aspect of the house, from the design to the collections to all types of fittings.

Serge Lutens[6] would also regularly come around, accompanied by plenty of anecdotes, to test his make-up on models who wore white overalls; it was more beautiful than lacquer. I remember his good humour, which was such a central part of that essential period of apprenticeship.

'I've always wanted my clothes to breathe between the body of the wearer and the fabric. Prints and decoration only weigh down that concept.'

How long did you work with Marc Bohan at Dior?
Two years, during which time I was his assistant, notably for accessories. To structure and rationalize all his ideas for clothing, I reworked all the designs for the collections in a unique fashion that he absolutely loved: I took the sketches that we used as a collection plan, and which were later hung on a board, and I redrew each piece using a ruler. Marc absolutely adored that extreme geometric approach. I also spent half my time working on the lines run by Philippe Guibourgé, including Miss Dior.

When did you take the decision to create your own collections?
After working with Dior I joined style agency Promostyl where I put together trend books for manufacturers. I was also briefly Jean-Charles de Castelbajac's right-hand and worked with him on those remarkable clothes he made using repurposed floorcloths and crêpe bandages.[7] In 1978, I met István Dohar, my partner for life, who was originally from Hungary and had studied art in Switzerland. He pushed me to create my own collections and always to be demanding and a perfectionist when making the clothes. In 1981, we met a financier, Nicolas Puech, who supported the collections for nearly two years. Having decided not to carry on with our young company, the collaboration stopped and I've continued with István ever since.

How have your creations always stood out from the zeitgeist?
My first collection, Autumn/Winter 1981, was shown at the ready-to-wear salon. It was made up of pieces with three armholes, for men and women, in completely traditional fabrics, like sheets, flannel, tartans, Harris tweed, and camel hair. The collection received a great deal of press and lots of copies popped up afterwards. In the 1980s, padding and shoulder pads were everywhere, and they ended up looking like caricatures. Stretch fabrics were also beginning to invade. I wanted to oppose all that by paring back the clothing as much as possible. I took out linings and canvas interfacing, so all that was left was the 'skin' of the clothing in which a body could move around unhindered. Then, thinking about starched haute-couture clothing that looked like support cages made me want to shake out all artifice from clothing and keep only the essential. So in 1983, I naturally turned towards silk crêpe and silk satin, which at the time were totally old-fashioned and so regarded with a certain disdain. Cut on the bias, those clothes pushed me towards a certain simplicity; they were almost like draping. I've always continuously stressed cut and movement, and paid particular attention to details. In 1985, I made sweaters and outfits with rolled necks and hems, which were made to measure and ordered by more than a hundred people, notably Bettina, the famous model, who was a loyal customer from the beginning.

Your clothes might have sensible cuts, but the colour palette is explosively unique and contributes to the feeling of poetic calm in your collections. How does colour fit into your wider design world?
I have always wanted my clothes to breathe between the body of the wearer and the fabric. Prints and decoration can only weigh down that concept; only colour can make clothing that already feels light even more ethereal. Right from the beginning, many of my designs had no buttons, zips or straps, and they contained no synthetic materials. That made them precursors of the recycling movement: there's no structure to be removed if the fabric is recycled. It remains true to its origins. Colours are the only possible observation. I invent them and I reuse them. At the École de la Chambre Syndicale, I put together a class about colour and I created a range of original colours for a Japanese fabric

manufacturer. The past three decades have been totally directed towards techniques of looseness in clothing and the rise of sportswear does nothing to go against that trend. In that context, colours become a priority. It's such a joy to seek the ascending and descending nuances of each one. Rarity comes not from an isolated colour, but from the environment in which it is set.

You've invented unprecedented clothes, like the 'three-sleeve-hole' jacket or the 'free-leg' dress. What role does the body play in your work?
Freeing up the body and allowing movement are both a major part of my work. You can wear the three- or four-sleeve-hole jacket with total freedom; it has no fastenings. Other pieces are about being wearable without ever constraining the body. Our skin itself is a source of inspiration to me. After one entirely white collection that concentrated on lightness, I created a 'teenage acne' dress with crêpe buttons, as well as a dress made up of seven layers of skin-like organza. The fabric of a dress is like the continuation of the skin – or a desirable version of it.

Your clothes seem to nurture a feeling of intimacy that feels non-negotiable and would be impossible for other fashion designers. You've designed a number of ballet costumes, notably for Trisha Brown, and in both your fashion and dance work, your design never breaks with this need for intimacy. Is that an ambition of your work?
If I had to give you a definition of haute couture today, I would talk about intimacy. Luxury doesn't exist in things that are shared by everyone. Intimacy is the only real made-to-measure that exists; everything else is just ordinary. My shows favour spaces of closeness and a silent dialogue between those who are watching and those who are presenting their clothes. Models aren't necessarily part of the shows; instead, each event is a space in which women of all ages and types can meet, just like in real life. A show is not about theatre; it deals with questions of women, of the self. That's also true on stage for a ballet. My clothes are envelopes to accompany each person on her journey towards the self.

Epilogue

As I leave, Adeline André makes a sign at me from the bay window of her studio – a handkerchief waved on a balcony and the 21st century evaporates from view. After my visit to Passage Dantzig and its complex of artists' studios from another time, I am reminded of why, since the beginning of my career, I have always thought of couturiers and designers as being as powerful and as ambitious as poets. Never mind the means, Adeline André will remain a figure in the history of fashion. Her fashion is literature. As I leave her in this humble setting of infinite prestige, it seems to me that sometimes it is others who make mistakes.

'Lune' housecoat in wool felt by Adeline André, Haute Couture, July 2017,
and 'Marcher sur des œufs' shoes by Adeline André and István Dohar, Haute Couture, January 1998.

Hair: Pawel Solis @ Artlist. Make-up: Adrien Pinault @ Management Artists. Casting: Julia Lange @ Artistry London.
Photography assistant: Rémi Procureur. Styling assistant: Aline Mia Kistli. Model: Loli Bahia @ Women Management.

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1. Sitting on the banks of the Seine approximately 20 kilometres northwest of Paris, Chatou is best known for Maison Fournaise, a restaurant popular with late-19th century painters. Pierre-Auguste Renoir's celebrated *Le Déjeuner des canotiers* (1880), now in the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, depicts a scene set on the restaurant's first-floor terrace.

2. Paris-based fashion school École Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne was founded in 1927; alumni include Valentino and Yves Saint Laurent. In 2019, it merged with the Institut Français de la Mode.

3. Jacqueline and Élie Jacobson opened Dorothée in 1959 on Rue de Sèvres in Paris; in 1962, they enlarged the shop and renamed it Dorothée Bis. Jacqueline began designing a label with the same name in 1964; its first catwalk show took place in Paris in 1971 at an event also featuring Kenzo and Chantal Thomass.

4. Marc Bohan took over at Dior in September 1960 after Yves Saint Laurent was conscripted into the French army; he remained at the house until 1989.

5. Philippe Guibourgé was Marc Bohan's right-hand during his time at Dior and created the Miss Dior ready-to-wear collection aimed at a younger clientele. Appointed artistic director at Chanel in 1975, he created that label's first ready-to-wear line in 1977. He left Chanel and founded an eponymous label in 1982. He died of chronic hepatitis aged 54 in 1986.

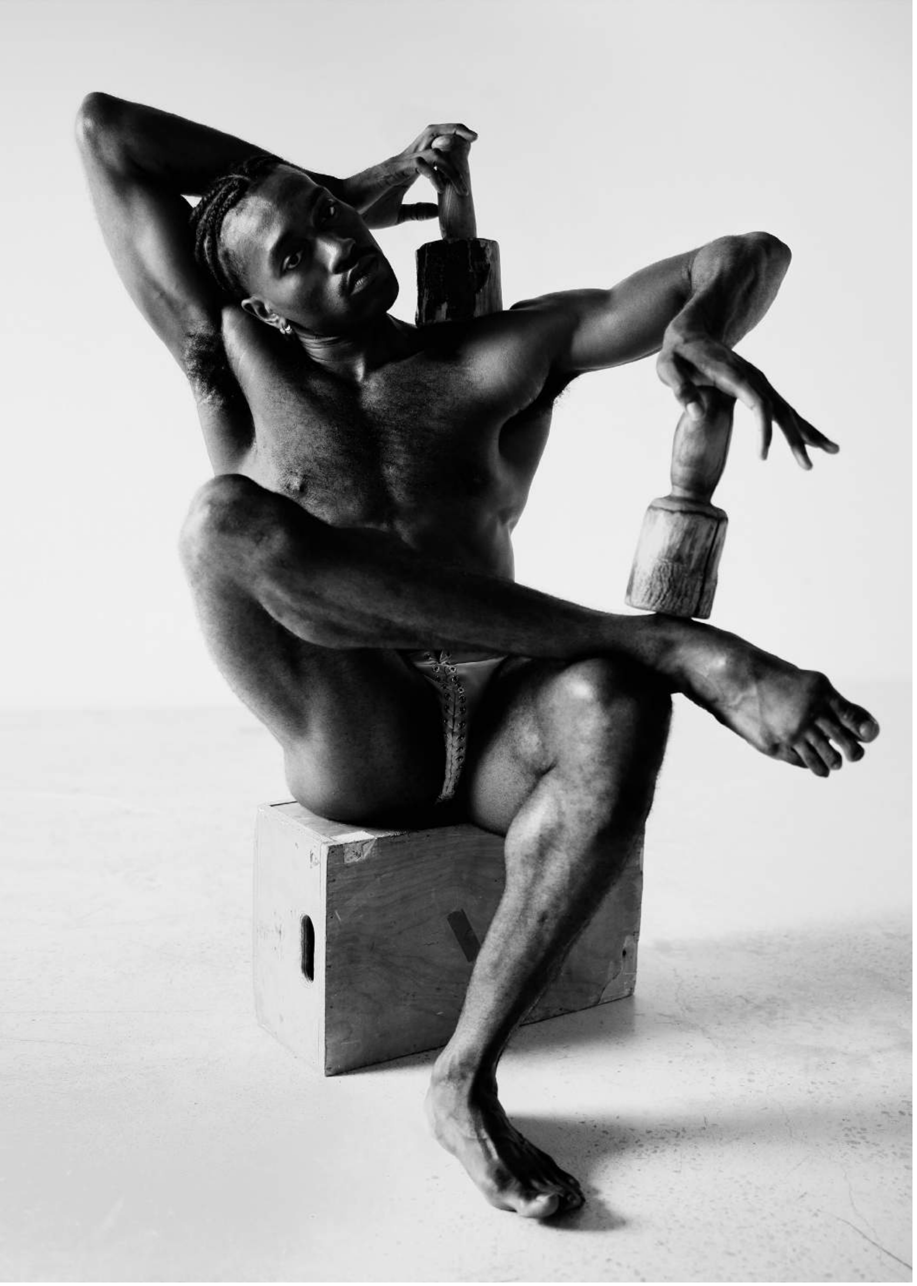
6. Photographer, filmmaker, make-up artist and perfumer Serge Lutens first worked for *Vogue* Paris in the early 1960s, where he collaborated with photographers including Richard Avedon and Guy Bourdin. He also worked with labels such as Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and, in the 1980s, Shiseido. He created his own make-up and perfume brand in 2000.

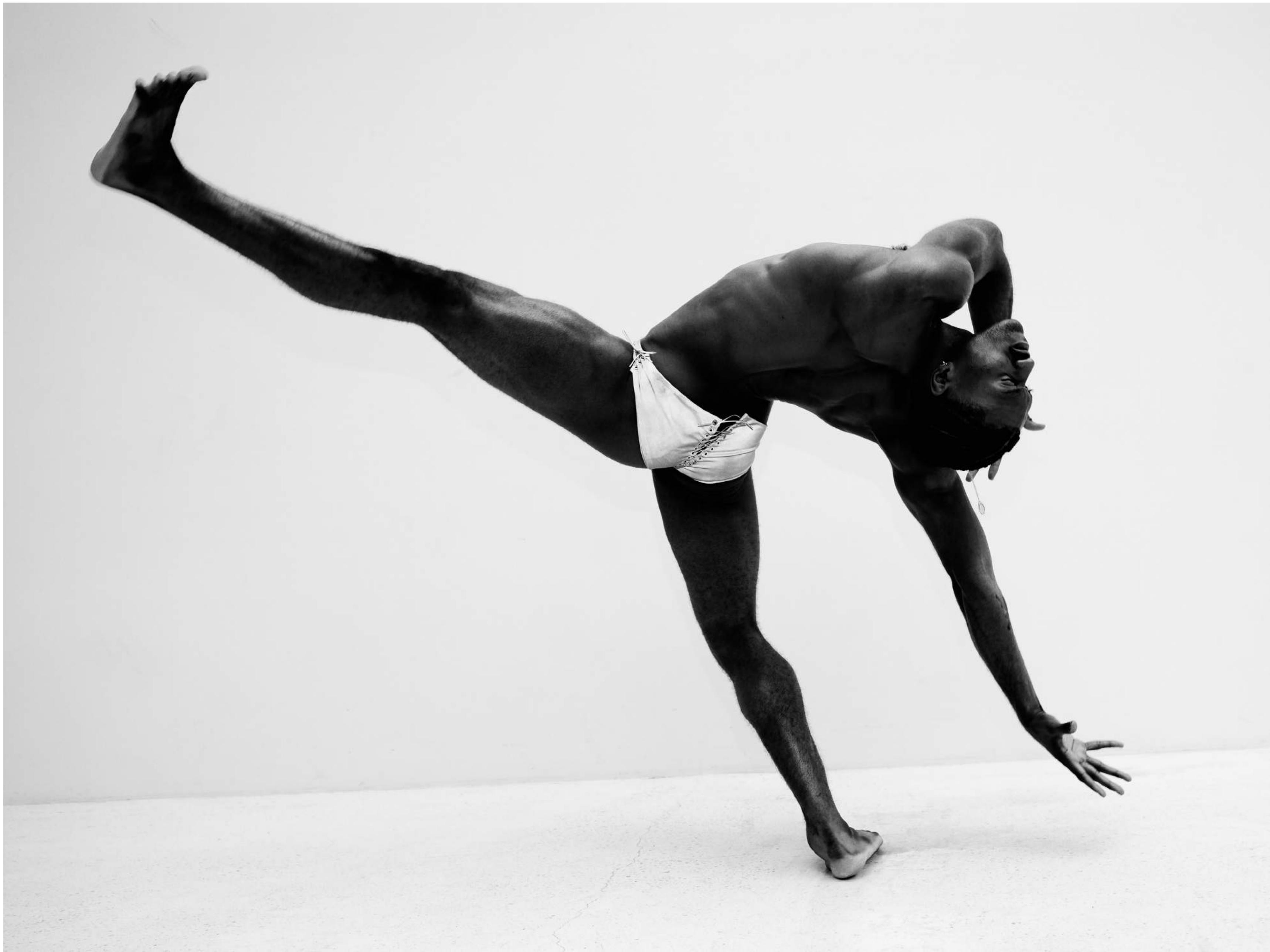
7. Jean-Charles de Castelbajac introduced his clothing made of reused fabrics such as bedsheets, floorcloths and sponges at a show in 1969. Crêpe bandages featured in his Spring/Summer collections of 1974 and 1976.

‘I want to make room for nuance and subtlety and fantasy.’

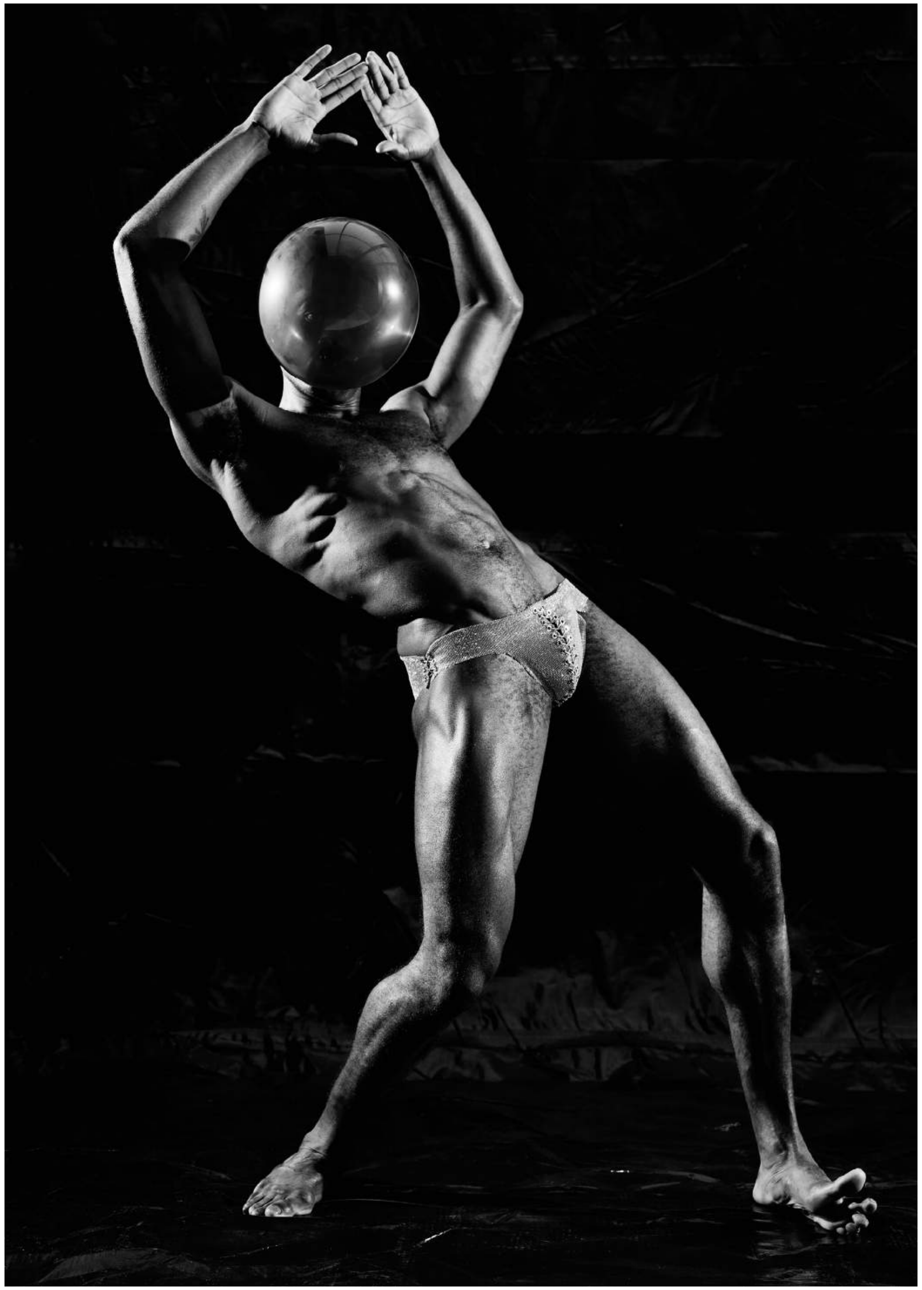
When dancer Vinson Fraley, Jr. and photographer Mario Sorrenti collaborate, they ‘lean beyond choreography into abstraction.’

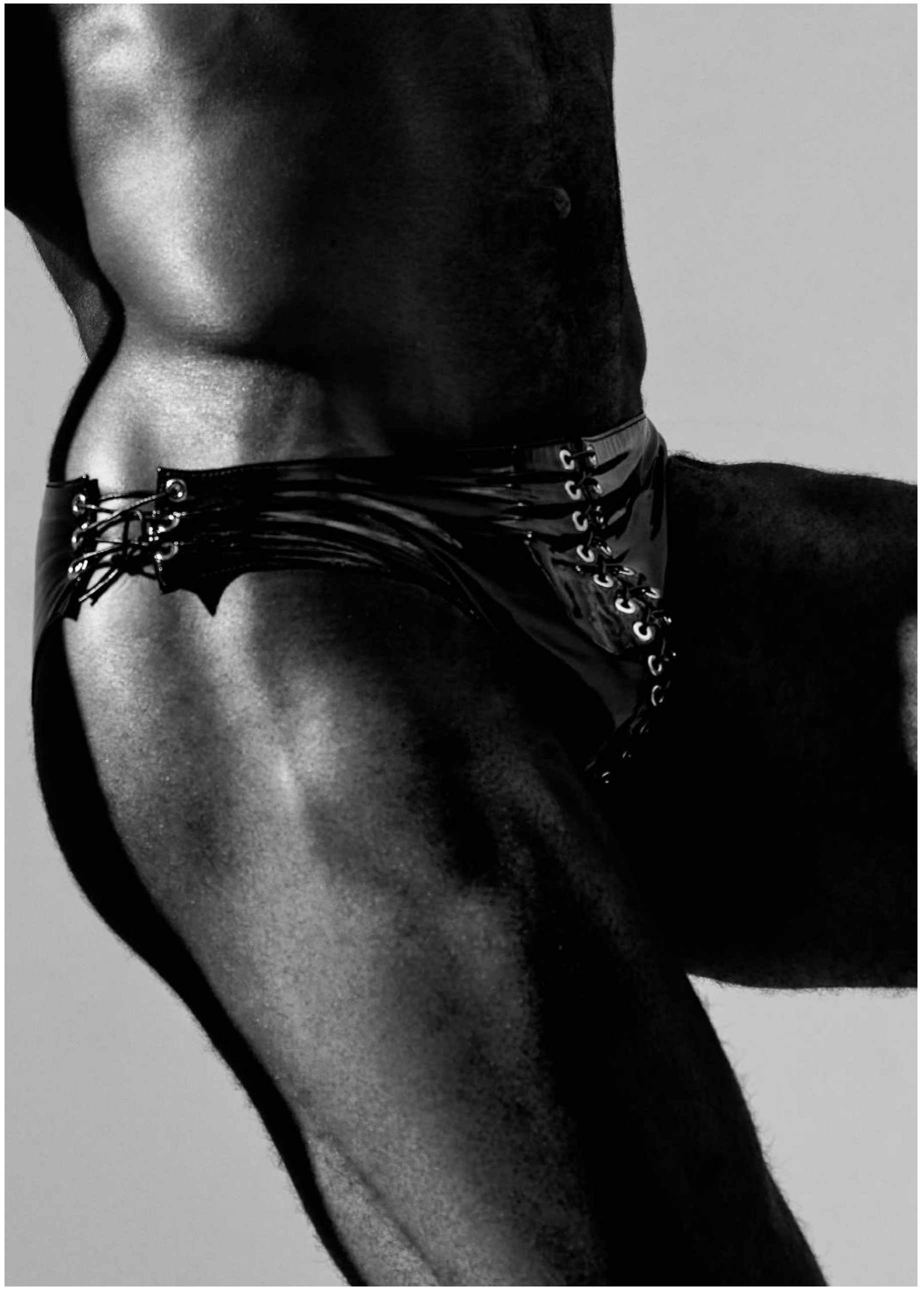
Photographs by Mario Sorrenti
Interview by Mahoro Seward

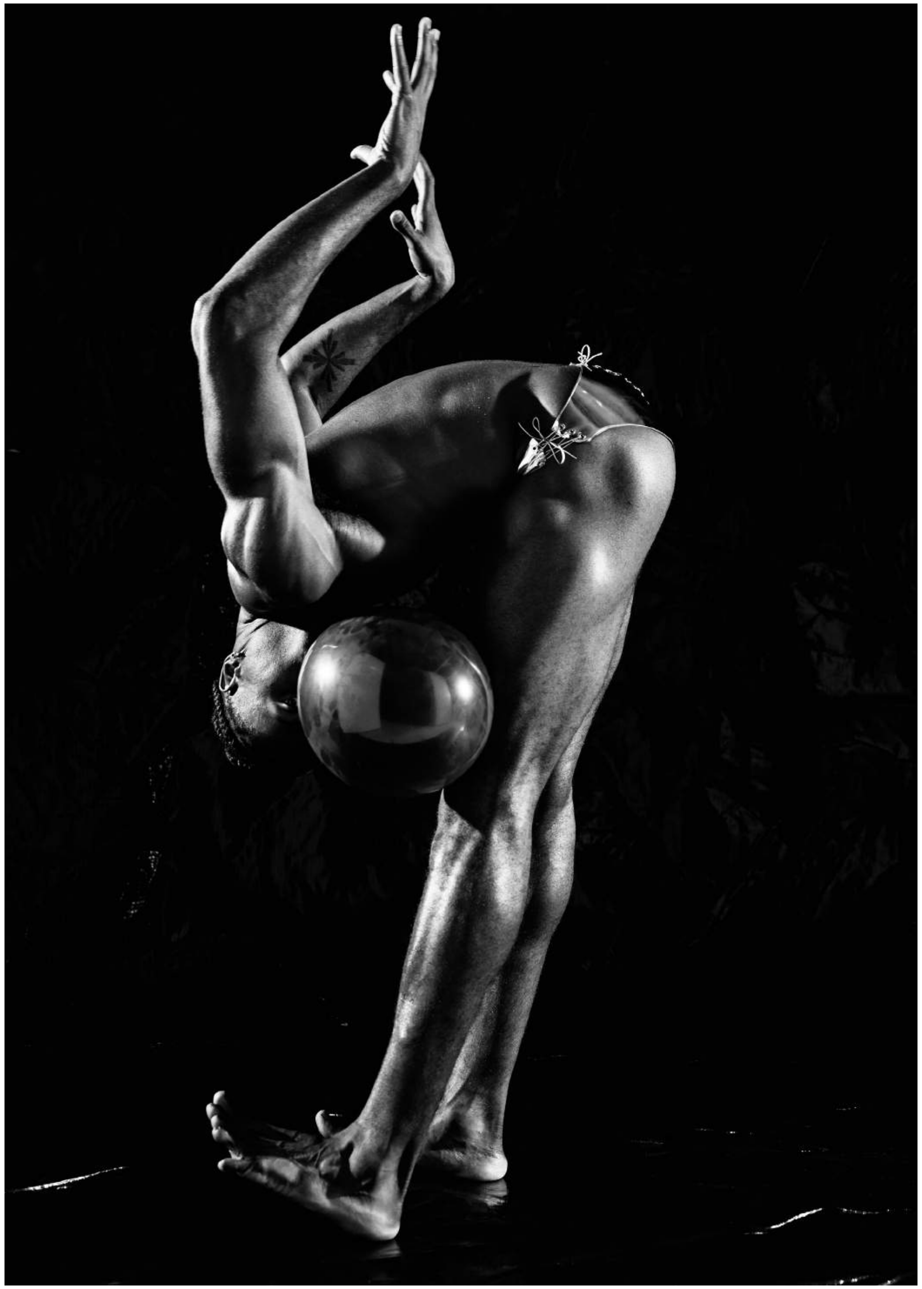


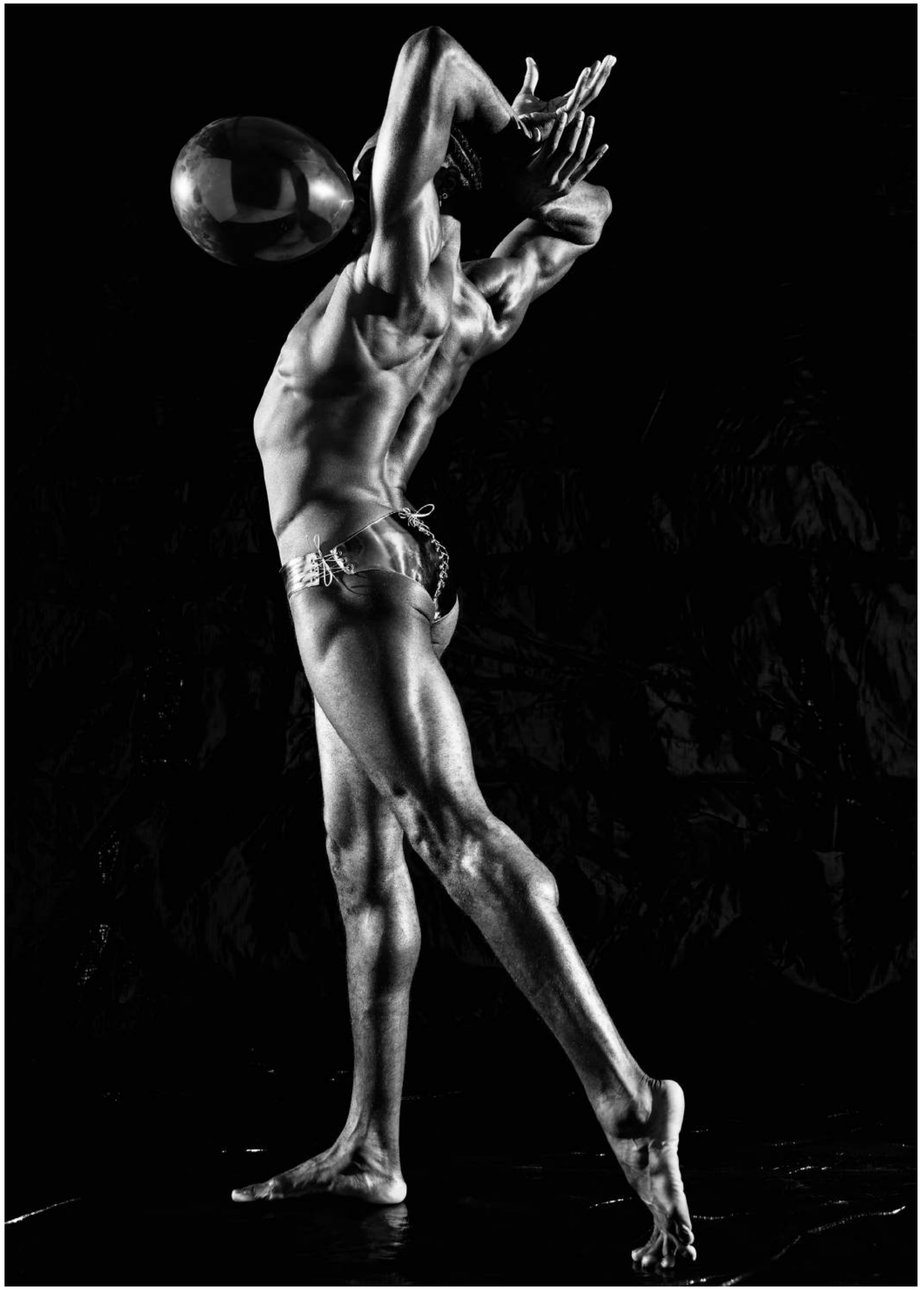


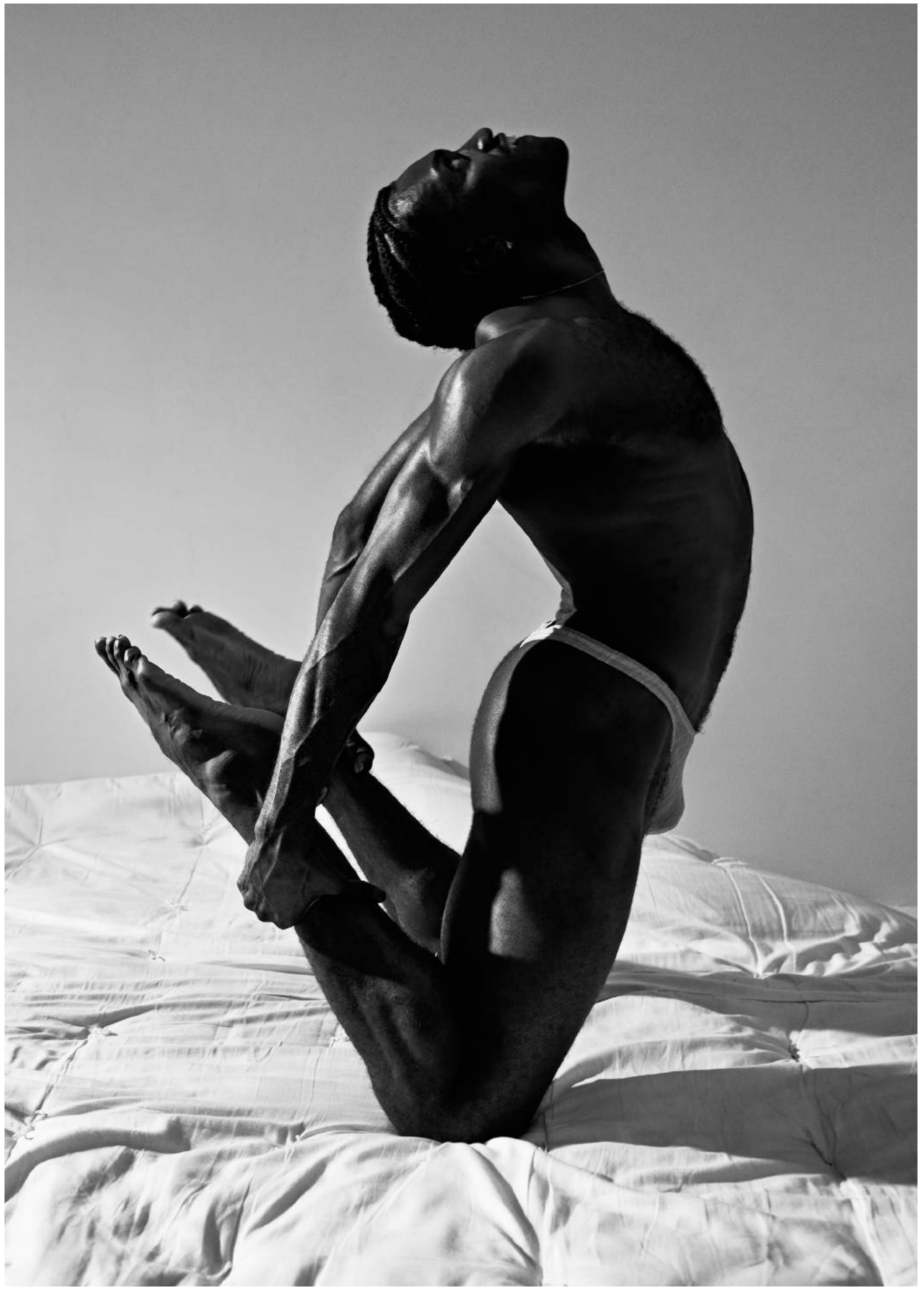
All photographs: Vinson wears Ludovic de Saint Sernin underwear (Signature Eyelet Brief and Signature Thong).











Grooming: Losi @ Honey Artists. Lighting technician: Lars Beaulieu. Photo assistants: Kotaro Kawashima.
Digital technician: Chad Meyer. Producer: Katie Fash. Production coordinator: Layla Néméjanski. Photo equipment: Dalia Amara @ Smashbox.

At a time when our own freedom of movement is so limited, there is something joyous in witnessing the lightness of captured motion. Photographers have long tried to find the magic required to freeze movement in a still image and often found the intersection of fashion and dance as a way to conjure their spells. The rapport between body and material, the flow of fabrics and form, have long inspired photographers and their muses: Richard Avedon and Veruschka, Jean-Paul Goude and Grace Jones, or more recently the bold poise of Luis Alberto Rodriguez’s images of ballroom voguer Kendall Miyake Mugler and ballet dancer Samuel F. Pereira. In each, the photograph’s success is based upon a creative conversation, a genuine collaboration in the purest sense: each image is a static token of an exchange of ecstatic energy.

> **‘You’re taking Nureyev or Nijinsky and bringing them into a contemporary language. It starts in the 1930s, and then, whoosh! Suddenly I’m in 2020.’**

Mario Sorrenti and Vinson Fraley, Jr.’s collaboration is another example, rooted this time in their shared desire to, as Vinson puts it, ‘lean into abstraction’ and ‘capture the essence’ of each freely choreographed gesture. Vinson, a 25-year-old Atlanta-born dancer who trained at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, is entirely of his time. He’s collaborated with experimental musician serpentwithfeet and contemporary artist Carrie Mae Weems, and has been part of dance legend Bill T. Jones’ company since 2017, but it’s on Instagram – @heyvinson – that the force and vigour of his creativity are perhaps best exhibited. It is where you can see him move to everything from Chloe × Halle to euphoric, thudding techno, all with a jaunty, balletic poise that creates contours as voluptuous as they are precise.

In the portfolio presented in these pages, this nuanced sexiness is accented by the garments Vinson wears: a thong and pair of leather eyelet briefs by Parisian menswear designer Ludovic de Saint Sernin. The briefs, described by the designer as the brand’s ‘iconic piece in the same way that the cone bra was for Jean Paul Gaultier’, are emblematic of the new space Saint Sernin has forged in contemporary menswear, bringing together sophisticated tailoring and a red-blooded masculinity. ‘I want to maintain an air of elegance and refined beauty,’ he says. ‘But at the same time, I also want to evoke a desire that’s unashamedly raw.’

Nine months after the photographs were taken in a different-looking world – before Covid and the emergence of Black Lives Matter into mainstream consciousness – Mario and Vinson sat down to reflect upon the fruits of their intense creative partnership, the sensuality of their and Ludovic de Saint Sernin’s work, and what it means today to collaborate as a Black subject and a white photographer.

How did you first meet and what triggered your interest in working together?
Mario Sorrenti: We first met shooting for *i-D* magazine about 18 months ago. I remember seeing Vinson warming up beforehand and I was, like, ‘Wow!’ I started photographing him, and I felt right away that there was something really incredible going on – a weird, unspoken understanding between us that was making the pictures happen.
Vinson Fraley, Jr: I love working with Mario because he leaves the space really open for me. I feel like I can lean into abstraction, like I can tap into his world and my world at the same time, which is how the magic happens; there is freedom, and, like he says, a kind of telepathy, an unspoken language. That comes from my admiration for Mario’s attention to detail and composition; these are things that I think about when I occupy the space he creates for me.

How did the collaboration come together this time?
Mario: Thomas [Lenthal at *System*] contacted me about shooting something with this sexy underwear from Ludovic de Saint Sernin. I looked it over and thought it was both really beautiful and strong at the same time. I immediately knew I didn’t want to be obvious and make an erotic image, which is what you’d expect with that underwear, but I knew it still had to be something associated with the body. That’s when I thought of Vinson, because what he brings is beautiful and sexy, but he’s not *trying* to be sexy. His work is more abstract than that; it starts with dance but extends into something more interesting. So I reached out to him, showed him the pieces, and he loved them.

What was the experience on set like? How do you go about creating the right mood for that performance to take place?
Mario: It was just Vinson and me in the studio; no stylist or hair and make-up. I brought along a few things from my house, like the stool and the wooden mallets – pieces my kids had made at school. When I take photographs I am very intuitive, so I brought just two or three pieces to the studio to see what Vinson would do with them, how he would transform them and make them his own.

Do you work in silence and respond to one another or with music and specific direction?
Vinson: Both. For this shoot, Mario showed me about 10 references that we’d come back to, abstract things, almost, so I took information from them without being told exactly what to do. I just had a random shuffle playlist of sounds going, which I listened to but also pushed against or broke through; that brings tension to the images and the space. I also loved the props. They were like toys, yet I was wearing these sexy thongs, and somehow it still looks hot. I love it when you can bring things together that really contradict each other. With all the references, and the different lighting and the sounds playing, we had this beautiful sort of theatre inside the studio. We tried certain gestures that Mario thought would be interesting; he always knows how to respond quickly and give me the information I need to stay in the moment or move on from it.

> **‘I work in creative spaces where there is often a balance of power in the room, whether the person is Black, white, Asian, trans, or something else.’**

Mario: I love the way Vinson moves and I kind of understand what he is trying to do, so I can quickly put myself in the right place to capture him in the most dynamic way. I get that he is trying to break the classical with something offbeat or a little quirky. I think we both try to achieve the same thing: to see what he is doing from the right perspective, from where it can be read properly. And then it is just playing, being honest, like when we played with the balloons: I just brought them along, with no idea what to do with them, and then he put one in his mouth and it obscured his face and it was just, like: ‘Wow, this is really abstract and playful.’ Those kinds of things aren’t planned, but as soon as they happen, we see them right away. It works for me when there is trust and intuition and willingness and an excitement about discovery. It is rare to have that relationship with someone, to create images like that.
Vinson: During a shoot, there is such a short amount of time to build that trust – just a few hours – but each time Mario and I are able to do it. When we created the pictures together for *i-D*, I felt like I could really see myself for the first time. There is something beautiful in how Mario manages to capture the essence, even when things are abstract.

Did you have any specific references in mind for the shoot?
Vinson: I am always referencing Bill T. Jones[1] who I work for. There are beautiful images taken of him, most famously by Robert Mapplethorpe, Keith Haring, and Herb Ritts, and in the ones I love, his body is at the forefront of the image, and you can see him experiencing something in front of the camera. It takes a really wonderful photographer to be able to capture that spontaneity. In my mind, I thought of classic, romantic, faun-ish images, like ones of Nijinsky[2] and Nureyev. But I also thought about images with brown bodies and the fantasies around them.
Mario: The thing I really enjoy about seeing you move and dance is that you’re taking Nureyev or Nijinsky and bringing them forward into a very contemporary language. When I watch you dance, it is like going through time: it starts in the 1930s, and then, whoosh! All of a sudden I am in 2020, because you change a gesture into something completely contemporary, but with this incredible thread that connects the two.

Vinson, could you explain your personal relationship with dance and movement and projecting your body when working with photographers? How has that evolved over the years?
Vinson: When I started about 10 or 11 years ago, the scope of how I looked at movement was so narrow, and now I see it in everything. I can understand the composition of many things through movement; it’s been my way of creating a thread between mediums that may not otherwise make sense together, or of forms inside of my body that I want to mash together. I trained a lot and tried to fit into institutions and a certain classicism, but I found successfully fitting into those boxes was more exhausting than the actual dance itself. That made me question why I’d even want to be seen in front of the camera. I want to make room for nuance and subtlety and fantasy and for dreams, a dreamlike space. This shoot was really nice because some part of me wanted to allow my sensuality to show more than my sexuality. I have been photographed in a way where my sexuality was at the front of the image and it felt

empowering, but maybe, in hindsight, those images aren't actually digging anything up. Like, how much am I willing to let out and to display? What does it mean to perform and allow yourself to be a vessel of the moment with the photographer? I found it fun to play with that power and submission.

Mario: I think it is funny that you mention sexuality and sensuality. For me, the most important thing is not the sexiness, it is the sensuality that exists within the motion and the movement. This motion is sexy, sensual, but the most important thing is the expression of the movement and the dance.

The only clothing to feature in the shoot is Ludovic de Saint Sernin's underwear, notably the leather eyelet briefs. How did these sensual garments fit into what you were trying to express and create?

Vinson: With many of the pieces, aesthetically, I was like, 'Wow, these are striking – I wonder how I would look in these!' I feel like I have never done something so forward, at least in terms of where it could have gone. The sexiness aspect was fun, too, certain pieces were maybe more masculine than other pieces, or more feminine, and it was fun to find that thread inside of my body. Like Mario said: it was about allowing expression to come through – ahead of my sexuality or my gender or my colour – simply in the shape and the cut and the colours and the hues and the textures of the garments.

Mario: We went beyond the sexuality of the pieces, trying to discover something new. It was liberating, because it gave us the opportunity to really focus on the body, on the figure, the expression, the motion. We let those things be the real power, the strength.

Vinson: In my dance and performance, I think the sex is going to show up by default. I find that I don't really need to let it show, you know what I mean?

Mario: And the creative aspect of it is what I find sexy. Not sexy like throwing it in my face; the opposite of that. I find that really sexy.

Vinson, you've talked about Nureyev and Nijinsky and images of the brown body, and publishing your latest work with Mario at the end of 2020 invites questions about how race relates to this sort of collaboration. What are your perspectives on a Black subject and a white photographer working together in such an intimate way?

Vinson: I work in creative spaces where there is often a balance of power in the room, whether the person is Black, white, Asian, trans, or something else. Those spaces lend themselves to real communication, to a sort of stripping down, and you may come to a place where you find something beautiful that you would not have found without the tension in the room, without an agreement that needed to happen inside of that space. It is important to really listen to one another and understand what we each bring into the room, because in some instances a white photographer and a Black subject can be harmful, tokenizing or exploitative. The white photographer may not have any idea who the person is they are photographing, except that perhaps they were cast because a brand needed more brown bodies to meet a diversity quota.

Mario: For me, personally, it's really a very human thing: I was introduced to Vinson and I just fell in love with his talent, his emotion, his honesty, his expression, with what he was creating and the way he was creating it, and I love being a part of that.

Vinson: Thank you! From my perspective, Mario is really, really, gentle. People had told me that before I met him in person, but I was still nervous, even when we worked together this time, like, maybe the rapport won't have the magic that it had the first time. But Mario gets what I am trying to get. And I look to him as someone I really want to learn from. When I look at his life, his experience, you know, I have nothing but gratitude.

1. Leading American choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones has produced more than 120 documented works since 1973, many of which address political and social issues. Widely regarded as a key figure in contemporary dance, he founded the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in 1982.

2. One of the most influential dancers of the 20th century, Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950) was notorious for his groundbreaking, brazenly sexual choreography for the 1912 ballet *L'après-midi d'un faune*, and his open affair with Sergei Diaghilev, the head of the Ballets Russes. The Polish dancer was immortalized in a series of photographs taken by Baron Adolph de Meyer and E.O. Hoppé.

‘It was fearless, organized chaos.’

When photographer Mark Lebon transformed a garage in 1980s London into a creative playground called Crunch, he became the catalyst for a sprawling countercultural scene that continues to influence fashion today.

Photographs by Mark Lebon
Styling by Amanda Harlech
Interviews by Jerry Stafford and Carmen Hall

Juergen T

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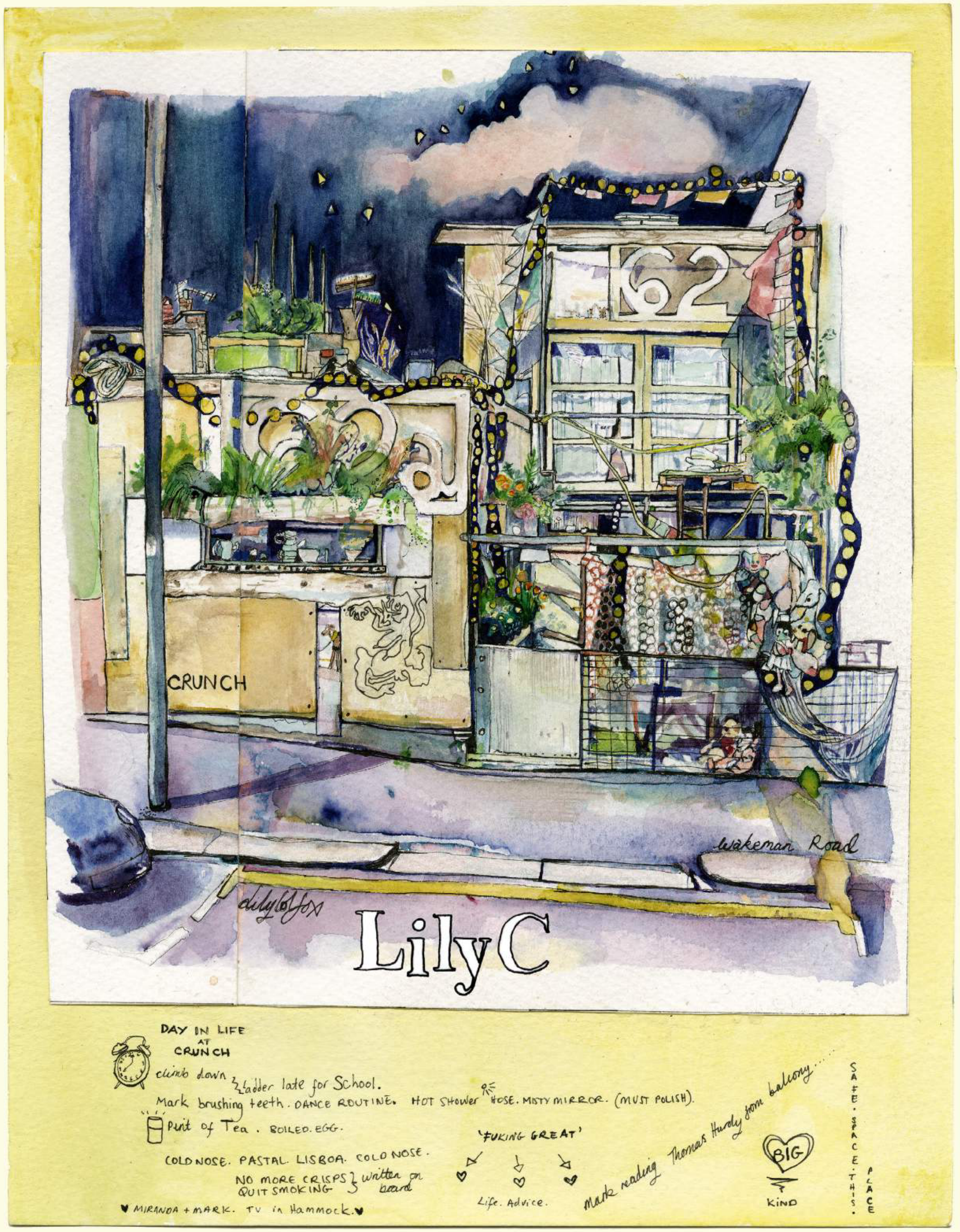
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CRUNCH
Wakeman Road
LilyC
DAY IN LIFE AT CRUNCH
climb down ladder late for School.
Mark brushing teeth. DANCE ROUTINE. HOT SHOWER HOSE. MISTY MIRROR. (MUST POLISH).
Pint of Tea. BOILED. EGG.
COLD NOSE. PASTAL. LISBOA. COLD NOSE.
NO MORE CRISPS QUIT SMOKING } written on board
♥ MIRANDA + MARK. TV in Hammock. ♥
'FUKING GREAT'
Life. Advice.
Mark reading Thomas Hardy from balcony.....
BIG
KIND
SAFE. SPACE. THIS. PLACE

Stepping into Mark Lebon's Crunch Studio on Wakeman Road in London is like entering a parallel universe. Chaotic, contradictory and sensorial, the precarious two-storey building is as much a sensibility as a space, the former-garage-cum-creative-playground a physical manifestation of its creator's labyrinthine mind. Ringmaster, visual documenter, self-saboteur, contrarian and visionary guru: Mark Lebon has been a countercultural fashion iconoclast for four decades. His generosity, inclusivity and booming baritone have been legendary since his first images for *i-D* and *The Face* appeared in the early 1980s, while his enduring influence on both peers and protégés bears witness to an uncompromising creative approach whose core values of integrity and irreverence have remained constant.

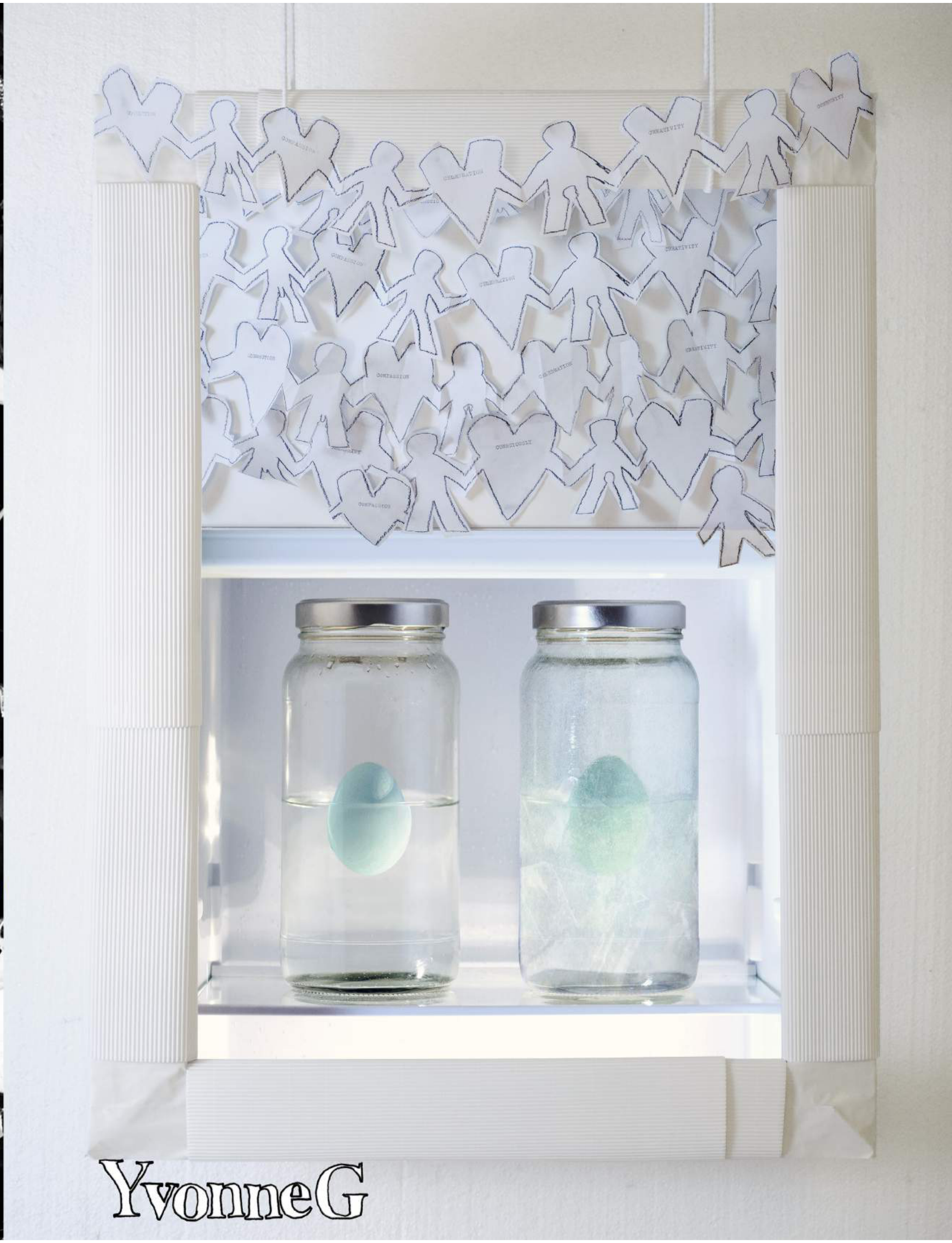
Mark's cross-generational group of collaborators and co-conspirators reads like a who's who of London's fashion and pop (sub)culture: Judy Blame, Christopher Nemeth, John Galliano, Edward Enninful, Jeny Howorth, Ray Petri, Simon Foxton, Neneh Cherry, Kim Jones, and Juergen Teller, among many others, as well as his sons, image-makers Tyrone and Frank. Kate Moss remembers hanging out at Crunch while still in school, and later living with Lebon and photographers Mario Sorrenti and Glen Luchford. 'Somehow I already knew about Crunch,' she recalls. 'I was really attracted to that whole scene.'

Within this collective space, Lebon has honed his craft through decades of industry feast and famine. Demonstrating an almost obsessive relationship to his signature visual tropes – cutting up and re-stitching negatives, double exposures, rephotographing prints, splicing and scratching Super 8 film – he has refined an aesthetic of deconstruction and reconstruction that he refers to as 'the mash up'. It's a technique and spirit that echoes the work of his closest collaborators, the late Nemeth and Blame, and laid a foundation for the likes of Martin Margiela.

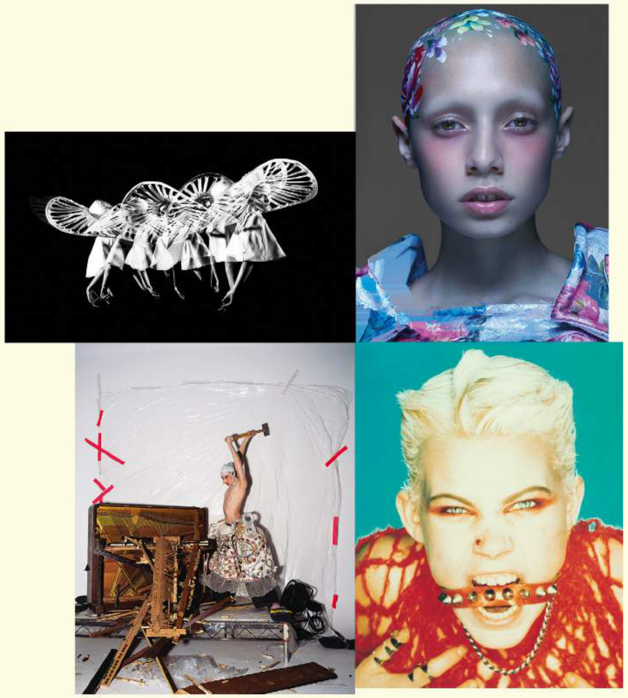
Mark recently approached *System* with the idea of creating a 'final chapter' for his ongoing archival project: a sprawling portfolio of new imagery, constructed around a recent collaboration with stylist Amanda Harlech. Shot at Crunch, those images are accompanied over the following pages by layers of photographic, artistic, written and archive fashion contributions by the extended Crunch family: from John Galliano's 1984 graduation collection, *Les Incroyables*, to Judy Blame's penny brooches, to Kim Jones' latest Dior Men pieces. The result is a visual equivalent of Mark's occasional dictum: 'Small world, massive universe, infinite detail.'

Jerry Stafford

Hugo S



YvonneG



Dear Mark,
Just got these off Nick:

Mark's theme - Deconstruction/Reconstruction
Carmen's question - When/how does deconstruction/ reconstruction appear in your creative process, if at all?
Nick's answer - I come from a scientific family. I went to University to study science. In science you always deconstruct the problem to find the answer.

Joy
How can humans be more joyful?
By giving up the search for happiness.

Staying real
Living the dream
How does fame affect realness?
Fame is a fake goal. Never work with your audience in mind. Only ever work for yourself.

Time
When does time move slowly, in your life? During what period or activities does it fly by?
We are all still, time travels through us.

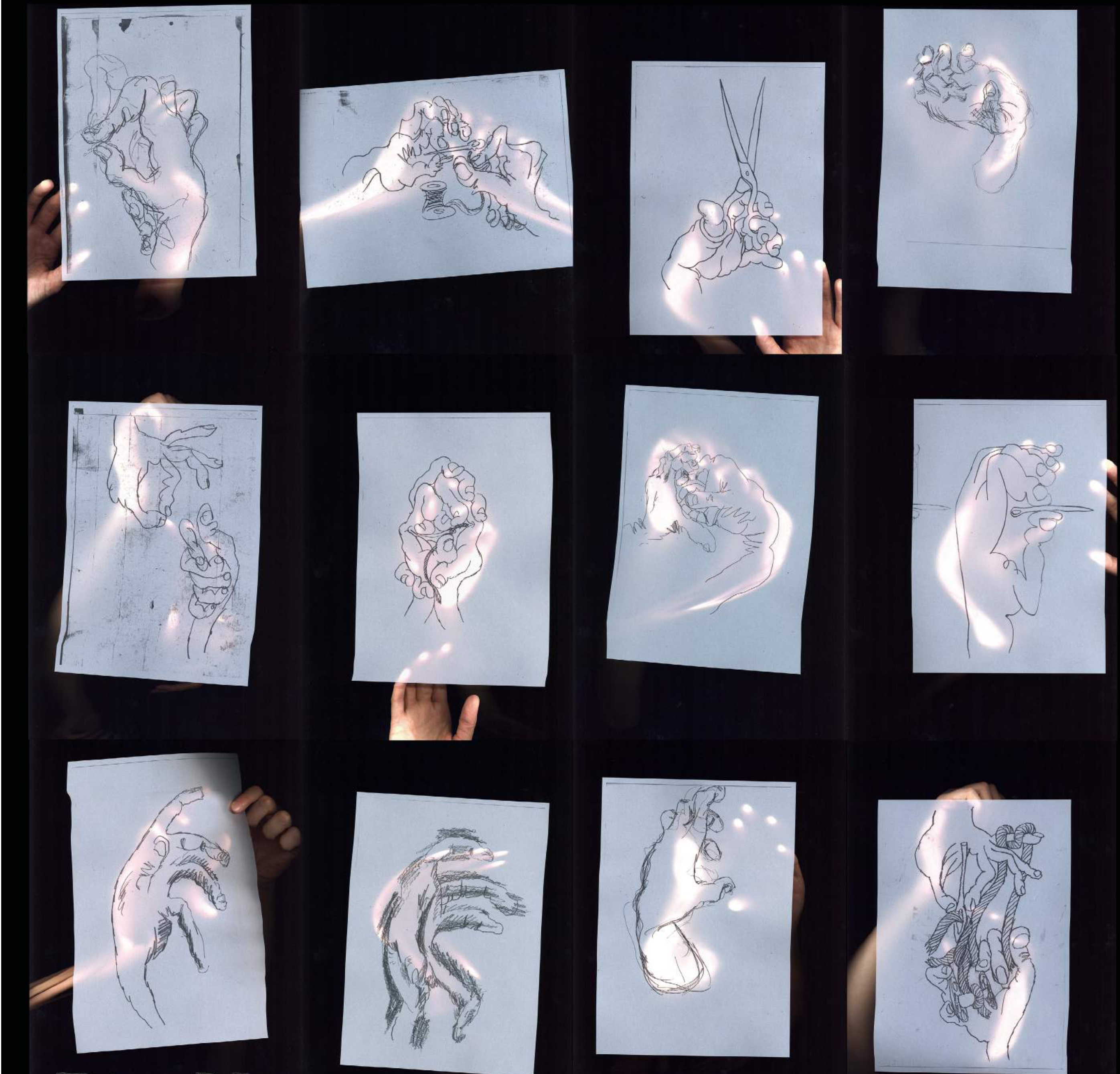
Understanding the problems, living the solution
Can you think of a positive outcome or a learning experience that followed either a risk you took, a problem at hand, or a mistake you made?
Every mistake is a new possibility. Failure is part of the creative process. Take the biggest risks when the stakes are highest.

Best wishes

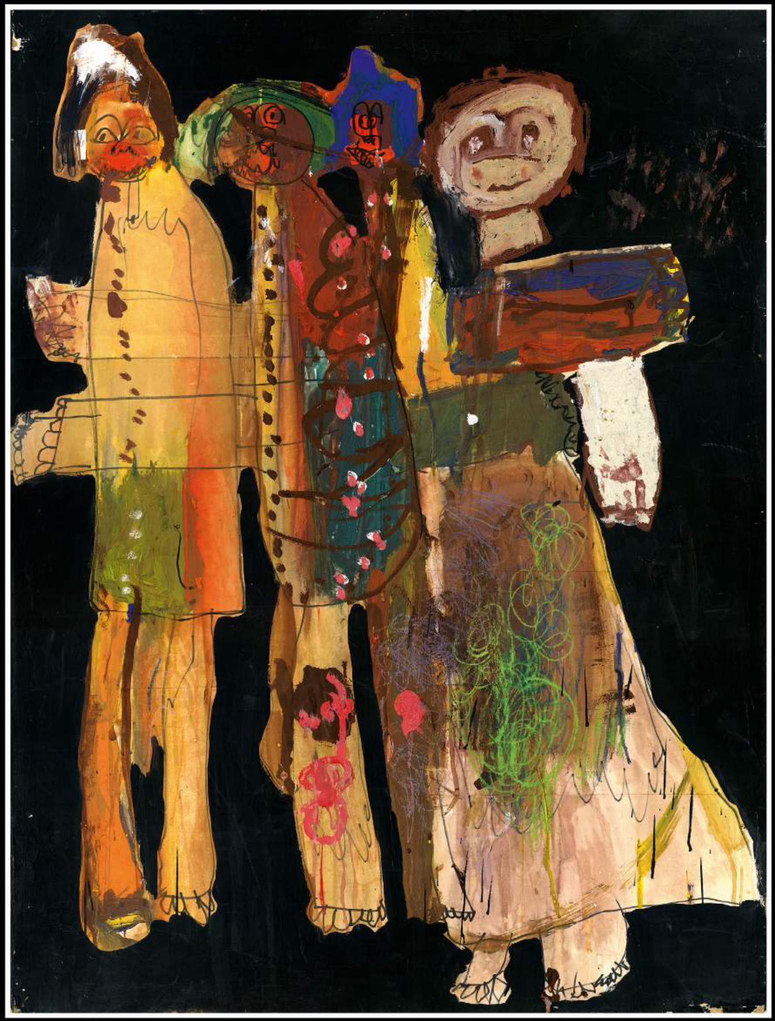
Charlotte xxx

Nick K

42
KODAK E100
41



Riyo N



Lui N

From the tip of your toes...

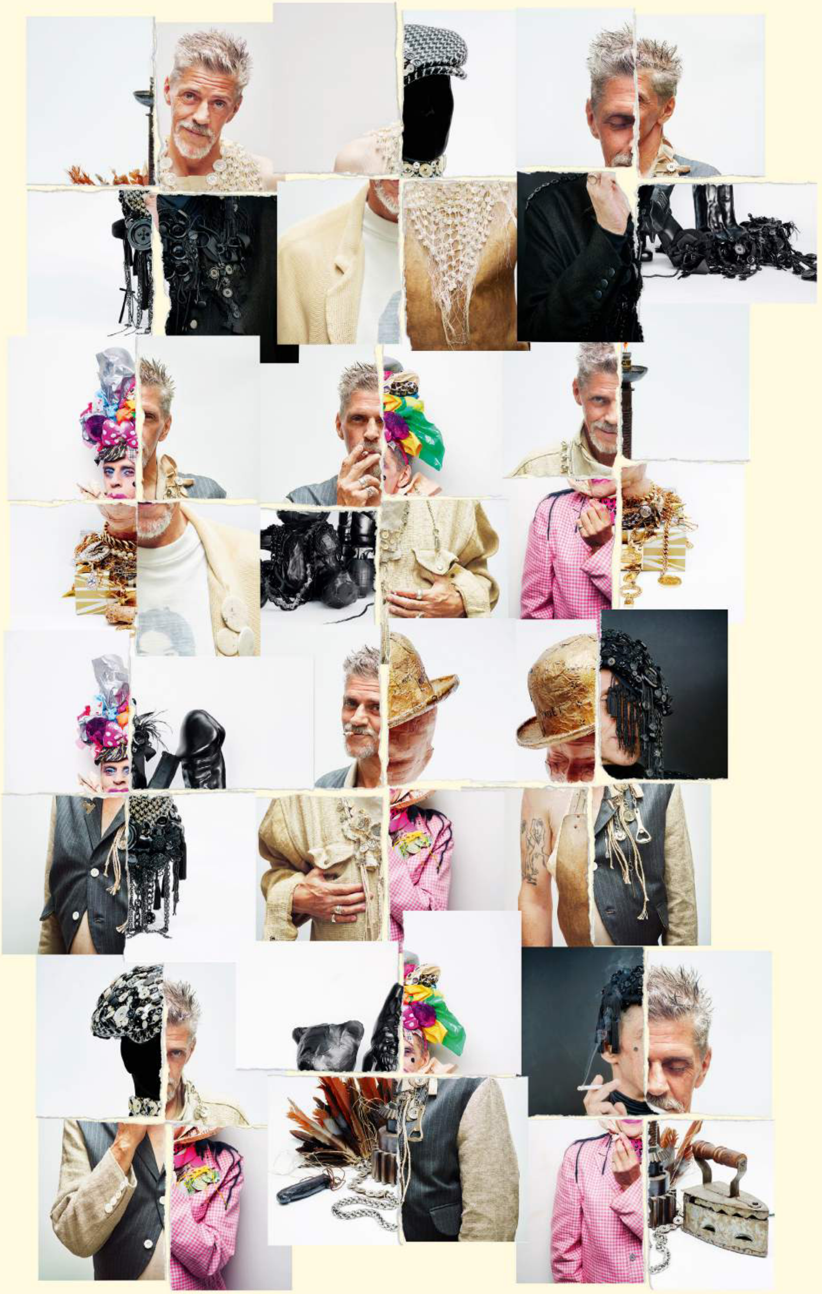
JUDY BLAME
NEVER AGAIN
NO ONE IS INNOCENT
HEAL THE WORLD
SMOKE
WE ARE ALL PROSTITUTES
STAY SAFE
FUCK OFF

Jeny H

IN FOR A POUND

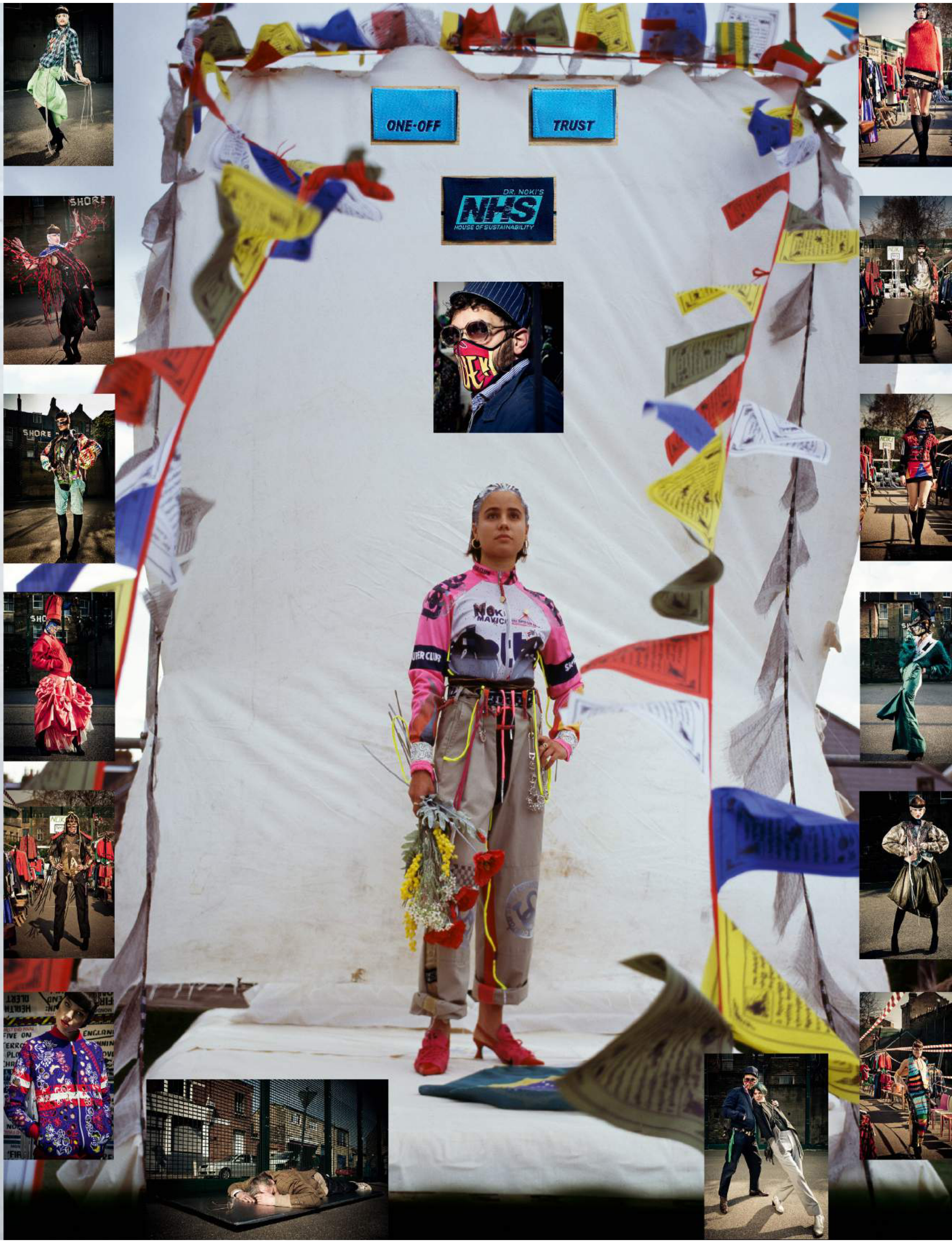
ONE PENNY
1926

Jason E



Mark M

HOME
HONESTY
HOPE
HUMILITY
HARMONY
HEALTH
INSPIRATION &
TRANSFORMATION


ONE-OFF
TRUST
DR. NOKI'S
NHS
HOUSE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Else K

ONE PENNY
1967

"The other day
September twenty second
marked another ten years
since Christopher Nemeth
one of the few designers I could respect
passed away
Time really does go by fast
depending on the depth and weight of our memories
and we can only move forward in time backwards"

THE JAPANESE SCENE MADE ME WORRIED ABOUT
WHO DID WHAT FIRST
BUT TRYING TO FATHOM IT OUT WITH TAKEJI
TOOK ME BACK
TO THAT MOST REFRESHING OF ERAS
PUNK
ITS ANARCHY AND BLATANT APPRECIATION
OF THE DECON RECON ETHIC
AND
AESTHETIC
WHAT THE FUCK IS
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
WHEN IT COMES TO
SAFETY PINS A LOOSE FRED
PENNIES AND POSTSACKS

Taque H

8 Oct 2020, 11:09
to Nemeth, me

Ho,Dear Mark;
It was so nice contacts from you, thank you so much,Mark.

I was very curious to hear a few things from riyo-san about your project.
I've actually been wanting to publish a book on Christopher Nemeth since before he died.

I used to be good friends with Terry at I.D. magazine and did some work with him.
I've also contributed to Rei Kawakubo, which he published, but this is my first time touching the System magazine.

It's a big story they are doing on me and (particularly) my relationship to Judy and Chris
it will also be the last chapter of the catalogue of my relationship to judy and chris.

What are the ways and means of the manuscript you have in mind about these two men?
After all, it's mainly your photos.
So what would you like me to do?
How I wrote this sentence on my blog the other day on the 10th anniversary of Christopher's death on September 22.
Please take a moment to read this and tell me what you would like me to write about.

As I recall, you guys did your first collection in London in '85. I haven't seen this collection,
but I know his world since then, when he moved in Tokyo and started his shop.

Also, when Lee McQueen came to Tokyo he was
I remember that it was fun and a really good time for me to show them around and take them to Christopher's shop and introduce them to Christopher.

What I want to write about is the wonderful encounters and interviews I had with Christopher and how his spirit has been absorbed into the Japanese street youth.

I am also particularly interested in Kako [illegible] and her history [illegible] sector, comme and yohji.

I don't understand "Kakos [illegible] and her history with the sector [illegible] know [illegible] possible.
"Keiko [illegible] and [illegible] history [illegible] sector" Isn't it?

Also, w[illegible] would [illegible] like to [illegible] writte[illegible] about "comme and yo[illegible]"?
Is this [illegible] relation [illegible] with [illegible] story [illegible] Tokyo?
Or will they write about each of them individually again?

they told [illegible] you were the man.

Maybe [illegible] because I'm an old, still, brave old man.
I have been visiting the collections in Paris every season, every year since [illegible].
It was Kawakubo [illegible] Yoji who gave me the opportunity to go to Paris to see the collection since 1985.
I also lived in London since [illegible]73.
My son was born in London.
Back in those days when Kensington Market was a thing.
I was [illegible] a friend of mine with her [illegible] store.
It was [illegible] enjoying the time.

Please [illegible] in touch by e-mail or Facetime or Skype?

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to plan, edit and publish the "Christopher Nemeth Book" with yours.

Please take care of yourself in these corona times.

Time moves so fast, and yet we can only move through time backwards. P. Valerie:

The other day, September 22 marked another 10 years since Christopher Nemeth, one of the few designers I could respect, passed away.
Time really does go by fast depending on the depth and weight of our memories, and we can only move forward in time backwards.

I still remember, [illegible] the moment [illegible] time.
I got the news from a friend in my apartment where I saw the illumination of the Tower Eiffel in Paris.

Why do [illegible] Christopher Nemeth?
That would be a [illegible] thing to say.
All because he was a super [illegible] designer.

From the perspective that my experience has fostered.
By no means are [illegible] than [illegible] of [illegible] "self-proclaimed designers" in T[illegible] very [illegible] they are "spoof" fashion designers.
Most of them are "spoofed" fashion designer's teachers, even though they have won awards and collections.

From my point of view, the "alien occupation" that we Japanese aspired to in the post-war era, as a c[illegible] and free profession,
was itself nothing more than a kind of impersonator culture in our society.
After that, they established a "consumer culture" society.
The root of this culture is the mass consumer society that was built by many people who wanted to impersonate Japanese people in the post-war era,
and it was built by their "perseverance and hard work".

However, Christopher Nemeth was not like a fashion designer at the level of impersonation.
Of course, this is because he created a "world that only he could create."
Of course, this is the world that he created and that only he could create.

The world he created was not only about clothes.
In the "clothes" that were the central axis of his imagined "view of the world" and its central axis,
there was the entire world of creation based on his aesthetic sense.
It was "Nemeth's view of balance, born of the singularity and sophistication of his pattern.
The way he chose materials and his graphic sensibility.
Shoes, sacks, caps and socks, and even badges, as well as his own.
And all of the interiors of the "shop as a vessel for his imagination", he personally installed the entire interior as a party to his creation.

Thirty or so years ago, and even after, there would have been many young Japanese who would have liked to do so much,
but for the most part he has done it.
Many of them were mostly frustrated where they didn't make it to reality for great creation.

Another reason why I respect Christopher is that there was no 'lie/falsehood' in his creative world.
The proof of this is that he designed and created clothes that looked the best on him, clothes that looked better than anyone else's.
This is what makes me trust him the most.
This was the fact that he made me believe in him the most.

As I remember, he opened a very crafty, London shop in Tokyo in 1986, behind the current Tadao Ando-designed Hills building at the back of Omotesando.
However, for the first five years or so, the shop was quietly and profoundly known only to the "fashion-conscious" who had become a cult favorite of the core Nemeth clientele.
The only reason for this is that the editors of Japanese fashion magazines at the time either didn't know about Nemeth's existence and his world, or didn't know much about it.

From 1990 onwards, Christopher Nemeth's cult status was gradually recognized by the second-hand clothing stores in Tokyo,
music DJs, and [illegible] fashion DJs who began to appear on the scene around this time.

As I recall, at the start of the 90's, the headline on the then fashion business newspaper The Senken read: "Rei Kawakubo Cracks [illegible] Nemeth!"
This is my contribution to the article.

This is my contribution to the article, "CdG received the hem design of C. Nemeth's pants pocket for ladies' wear".
But the editor of The Senken ran it with this headline, which caused an uproar.
As a result, I was punished by CdG by not receiving any show tickets for about two seasons.
I wrote this after confirming that "Mr. Kawakubo went to C. Nemeth's shop and her bought about the one rack of his garments".

The current relationship with CdG is, in my opinion
Yes, after all, Mr. Kawakubo has always loved "Christopher Nemeth".
That's why "Christopher Nemeth" is now sales at the DSMK Ginza store of CdG.

We take this opportunity to pray for the repose of his soul and to remind ourselves of the existence of those who can only go backwards through time.
Let's just think of each other.

Taqueji Hirakawa

The following is my archived contribution" from 10 years ago.

I learned that from a friend.
Not right away.
I couldn't believe it.
It was hard for me to believe.
The [illegible].
I still have to admit it.

I didn't know [illegible] to expect.
I was a very non-sense [illegible].
So, I feel extraordinarily sorry and sad.
De[illegible]

From afar.
I am deeply saddened at the death of Christopher Nemeth.
I am deeply saddened at the death of Christopher Nemeth.

I am deeply saddened at the death of Christopher Nemeth.
He was a respectful creator as a human being.
He was kind and stubborn.

More than anyone else, he made himself the best [illegible] flattering [illegible].
He [illegible] truly a pure and charming man.
You know, all of his own m[illegible].
In that space.
I'll never forget [illegible] smile.

With Mr. Keiko beside me.
His kindness and playing with his dog.
Can of beer in [illegible].
A world of my own, where I can only [illegible] shyly.
But that's the [illegible] confidence, of course.
This [illegible] kind of landscape [illegible] was [illegible] Nemeth to me.

In my [illegible] years in the mode.
Most of them are in VANITY world.
Finding the me[illegible] entrance.
I'm [illegible] to run to the mo[illegible].
People who are [illegible] to run away.

In such a world.
I walked my way straight through.
important person.
[illegible] truly pure.
A[illegible] was invaluable.

" [illegible] an amazing influential tale.

Terry Jones watched him.
For a long time, 25 years.
The Harajuku fashion kids of the 90s
C[illegible], J.Galliano, A.L.Mcqueen & more,so on.
Lots of fun to wear.
To all the people who love clothes, me included.
I visited his world.
And.
The excitement of the craftsman's spirit and its greatness.
To the point of going around the earth.
Be gentle with [illegible].
He left a fierce influence.

He knew his place in the world.
He knew the world he had to stand in and
Clothes you like, [illegible]es you like, draw [illegible] you like.
The way you li[illegible].
She must have taught it and believed it.

"Ancient Briton"
It was the theme of his '85 debut collection at London.
A worldview that has never aged.
The venerable English spirit is indomitable.
With the craftsman's spirit as one's own technique and confidence.
A romantic who wanted to live purely.

To live the life you were given, pure to yourself.
Of course, it's not easy to do this alone.
Keiko and her two daughters
You have a wonderful family.
A foreign country [illegible] than 25 years spent in protection.

That foreign country is

I don't know what was really going on with him.

True serenity in heaven.
Please smoke a cigarette with a can of beer in hand.
Watch over the people who should be watching over you.

A lot, a lot.
Thank you so much, thank you very much.
Mr. Christopher Nemeth.

Please, please.
May you sleep well.

Takeji Hirakawa: September 25, 2020 / In Ile-de-France.

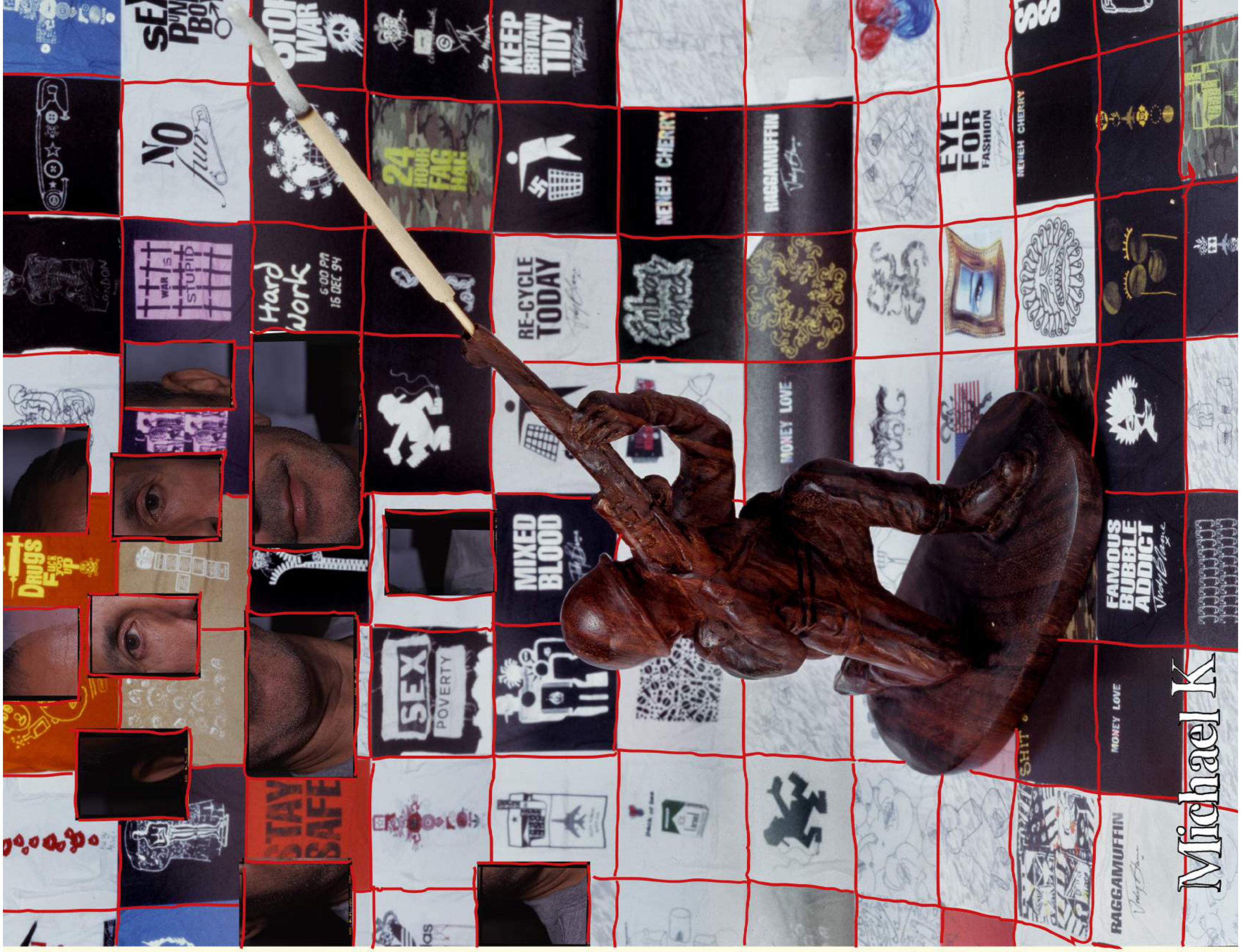
P.S./
I am.
To my inability to do anything about it.
I'm sorry I couldn't keep [illegible] to you.
[illegible]serable and
Horseshit.
I will live with my remaining [illegible] mind.
Thank you, Keiko, for your kindness.
[illegible] peace with you.

HIRAKAWA:
Authorship by Hirakawa
1st draft / September 25

Going on means going far, going far means returning.
T.aqueji.Hirakawa.
[illegible]0004
www.lepli.org/discipline/

2020/10/07 21:[illegible] Mark [illegible] <[illegible]arklebon@gmail.com>:

Going on means going far, going far means returning.
T[illegible].Hirakawa.
[illegible]0004
www.lepli.org/discipline/



Michael K

mind my MiND
lover
strang
rival
reach
child
enemy
spouse
parent
sibli
artner
friend

'I needed to deconstruct and reconstruct my pictures for them to be of any interest to me.'

Mark Lebon in conversation with Jerry Stafford, 21 October 2020.

Jerry Stafford: Let's go back in time. Where were you brought up?
Mark Lebon: West and Central London, and a little bit North. As an adolescent, I did quite a lot of East, and as a mature student, which I consider myself to be now, I've been taken South by my boys, because that's… cool.

[Laughs] It is cool! What about your first visual memories ?
My first visual memory is looking over the cot at my younger brother on the Edgware Road in what I believe was a block of flats called Park West.[1] I could only have been about two years old!

When did you first start getting interested in image, storytelling and music? For example, what was the first record you bought?
One record that springs to mind is 'Leggo Skanga'.[2] When I was 13, I started using a yoyo. It was one of the only toys that I ever got any good at. I was going to boarding school around Victoria Station and these West Indian kids were admiring my skills and they started shouting what sounded like, 'Scanner! Scanner! Scanner!' Then I heard the record 'Leggo Skanga' and I got into reggae.

Were you more into reggae and soul music as a kid?
Well, my mother used to play a very eclectic mix of music to me as I went to bed, but the first records I owned were Paul McCartney's first album and *Let It Bleed* by the Rolling Stones. I didn't actually buy those; I think they were probably bought for me. I was definitely Beatles rather than Rolling Stones. That's cool or uncool, depending on what you think. I had breakfast with the Beatles when I was seven years old because my mother's best friend was one of their secretaries. I remember being so embarrassed that I just sat on the stairs and I gave away all the autographs I got just to make friends at school. So, yes, I was sort of in the middle of it right from a young age!

'The idea of Crunch was born out of my deep shame about being upper middle-class. I just escaped myself through supporting others.'

When did you first decide that you wanted to work in the creative arts or photography? Did you go to college or art school?
I left boarding school because of a family breakdown situation and then I landed up living in my dad's house. I ended up not taking my A-levels and taking loads of drugs instead. My style guru at the time was Toby Andersen,[3] whose parents owned the Lacquer Chest, a very cool antiques shop in Kensington Church Street that I've been told influenced the Conrans and Habitat in the early 1960s. I was at art college in Worthing, a town where old people go to die. So there was a huge amount of second-hand clothes and we bought a lot of 1930s big, double-breasted suits. I did two years in Worthing. I repeated the foundation course as I couldn't make up my mind on what I wanted to do. I then got invited to do a BA course in communications design that I wasn't actually qualified for in the East End of London, which I rather liked; I did two years of that three-year course. At that time I was friends with Ray Petri[4] whose degree of involvement in fashion back then was ironing his boyfriend's clothes. Then he started dealing in antiques and became the agent of photographer Roger Charity.[5] Through Ray doing that, I got connected into the fashion scene.

That was when you first decided to take pictures yourself?
I was quite socially engaged and politicized at the time, but was actually really disillusioned with the possibilities of social change. Windscale [nuclear power station] had opened and nuclear power had already become part of our national grid. I thought, 'Fuck it, this ain't going to work, I'm just going to enjoy myself.' The idea of getting paid loads of money to take pictures of women was quite an appealing option. So I went for it. Ray and I ended up taking pictures of beautiful boys instead.

Can you remember your first job as an editorial or even a commercial photographer?
My first girlfriend Daisy was one of the first people I shot. Carlo Manzi[6] did the styling; we shot her as a jazz musician in a men's suit.

Was it for an editorial?
No, just as a test. My first editorials were for *Girl About Town*, an uncool free magazine; *Miss London* was the cool one. I always used to work for the uncool magazines. *The Face* was cool, *i-D* was uncool, so I worked for *i-D*. My first advertising job was for Laura Ashley [both laugh]. That's when Camilla [Lowther] first started being an agent and I was on her first roster along with Perry Ogden.

You've spoken already about Ray Petri, but who were your initial collaborators in the fashion world?
Yvonne Gold, who was a great make-up artist at the time, was very important and ready to support me. There was also Carlo. We used to hang out at Bow Street. I was fortunate that Cameron [McVey] worked in a studio where there were about 15 different working photographers. So after having worked for him, I freelanced and worked for lots of different photographers. Then Ray slowly started to become a stylist and big news.

'It's interesting you draw parallels between my personal life and my creative deconstruction and reconstruction – they're mirror images of each other.'

How did your relationship with Ray and the Buffalo family[7] evolve? Did it happen organically?
No, it did not happen organically: I was coerced into Buffalo. It was quite a few years after I'd started, four or five years maybe, and I'd already had my son Tyrone, which was an odd thing to do at the age of 25, and it was all kicking off for me. I had started my own production company and I was two years down the line probably with Camila Lowther as my agent. I'd probably just met Chris [Nemeth] and Judy [Blame]. It was kicking off in a serious way for me with far too much going on. I got to take a picture for *The Face*; it was just one page of menswear: [model] Simon de Montford, with a torn-out picture on his chest. The credit for it ran: 'Photo: Buffalo, Mark Lebon and Ray Petri.' I was like, 'What the fuck's Buffalo?!' This is my first credit with *The Face* and suddenly I haven't got a fucking credit. I was really pissed off. Anyway, I was told that Buffalo was owned by Cameron [McVey], Jamie [Morgan] and Ray and it was an agency and there I was, part of this fucking agency without even being asked and that really pissed me off. Then *Arena* started and I got to shoot the first big stories for the first and second issues. All was forgiven, well, eventually forgiven, *gradually* forgiven.

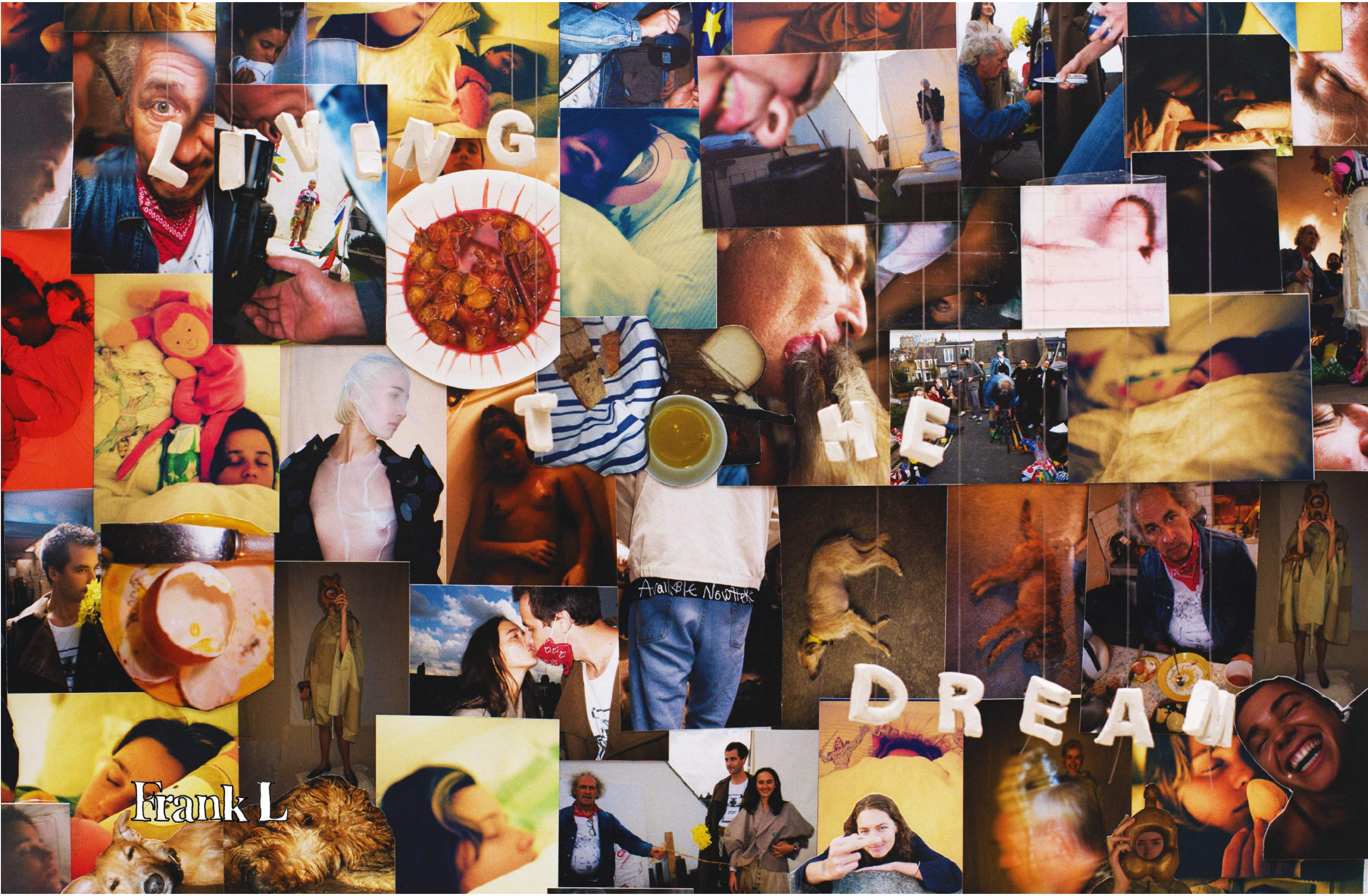
What was your motivation in creating a space such as Crunch? When and how did you find its present home and create this sort of multidisciplinary collective workshop and playground?
I found this place about 10 years after having started Crunch. We had lots of different premises all over London before then. Basically, I think it was just my co-dependent sickness and deep shame about being upper middle-class and having stuff. So I wanted to help other people and that sort of went back into childhood trauma. I just escaped myself through supporting others, so it was really a sickness that drove me to try to support and help other people. Quite often I lose myself in helping other people rather than taking responsibility. Drugs weren't enough! I needed to have a sickness with people to really knock any possible feelings on the head.

When I walk into the Crunch space now and see the Fric and Frack[8] furniture and lights and Judy's jewellery and collages and Dave Baby's wood-and-stone-carved sculptural pieces, I remember how it was such a creative cultural hub…
I feel it's all a bit of a myth – and that the myth became a reality. It was a bit of a myth because I never employed anyone; it was all sort of untrained people who came along, so it was never going to become manageable or a financial success. It was kind of a strange, weirdo, schooling thing that people got involved with. The first sense of it was at the New Cavendish Street flat where I was living after my mother died, when I met Judy and the Buffalo thing kicked off. That's when I bought my first painting from John Maybury even though I actually went to college with John and knew him from that time.

He told me that he swapped a painting with you for a Christopher Nemeth jacket, which he still owns by the way.
Well, I've got very little of the painting left…

He told me it fell apart, but the jacket hasn't!
I paid 200 hundred quid for that painting I'll have you know! I've got it on the record. John's jacket had one of Chris's paintings constructed into the back.

Yes, it's a beautiful jacket. How important has your relationship to fashion and designers been in your work and which ones have been the most inspirational in the London, Paris, Tokyo triangulation?
Obviously, Chris and Judy. I actually became their agent. Judy did his first styling with me. He just did accessories before then. So they were definitely a


LIVING
THE
DREAM
Available Nowhere

Frank L

major part of it and were the biggest influence. Before them there was Ray and Toby Andersen, who I went to Worthing with, who was a very big influence as well. His band were called Funkapolitan and were into Antony Price. Antony's was a silhouette that I really loved. I mean, he was the only one of that sort of big 1980s thing that I actually related to.

Who were the other designers that you then started exploring?
John came at sort of the same time as Chris and Judy.

John Galliano?
Yes. And then in Japan, it was a chap called Takeo Kikuchi.[9] When he was working at his brand Men's Bigi, he was the first person to take street-cast English fashion to Japan. Then that took off in Japan and all of the gang were around.

What about Martin Margiela? He was obviously someone you admired.
Margiela was sort of a little bit further down the line. We always felt that he had been influenced by Judy, and I had heard a rumour that when he saw the stories we were shooting in *i-D*, it encouraged him to leave Gaultier where he was working at the time to go and do his own thing. I've tried to get that story verified for this project, but still haven't managed to do so!

> 'I heard a rumour that when Margiela saw the stories we were shooting in *i-D*, it encouraged him to leave Gaultier to go and do his own thing.'

That deconstruct-reconstruct ethos has always underpinned your own aesthetic, so Martin Margiela, John Galliano and the Japanese new wave designers like Rei Kawakubo were naturally close to your own process. Is this modus operandi something that you think has developed consciously or subconsciously in your work over the years?
Very, very consciously. Basically, I fucked up and I continue to fuck up with my photography. So I needed to deconstruct and reconstruct my pictures for them to be of any interest to me; not all of them but most of them need to be fucked about a bit for me to accept them. Because I couldn't get it right the first time, being explicit about the process became my signature style. When you're showing the process of something, you're deconstructing it.

So it's born out of your strong belief in and your adherence to an idea of risk and accident and making mistakes?
Yes, just incompetence probably as well! [Both laugh] Also, still having to come up with something that works, but not getting it right the first time. It was born through necessity, and then was further developed very consciously.

Why do you think your process is underscored by this self-destructive urge, this obsessive compulsion towards something that is unfinished or broken?
I think it might be because I have a certain degree of attention-deficit disorder; fear narrows my vision and I can't see the bigger picture. I'll fix it later, fuck it, just move on, I'll sort it out afterwards. Initially, we called the technique 'mashing'.

I think that your whole process is just a reflection of life! I mean we do not live in a perfect world, particularly at the moment in the business of image-making. In fashion, there is an absolute and imperative need to take risks and to learn from our mistakes.
I suppose I've been very blessed in as far as I was given a lot of love as a child so maybe that's given me the confidence to keep going in spite of shit happening. I have learned to embrace the fact that I actually could work and I am lucky that I've had the confidence to keep going. Only a person who was given a lot of self-confidence can get away with that kind of behaviour. Having said that, I did have to take vast amounts of drugs.

You've got many admirers, whether photographers like Glen Luchford, Mario Sorrenti, David Sims, Juergen Teller, Cindy Palmano, or a whole generation of unique creative talent like Simon Foxton, Edward Enninful, Michael Kopelman, Stephanie Nash, Jeny Howorth. They all acknowledge the nurturing and attention you showed them at the start of their careers and afterwards. You're definitely seen as a mentor or a father figure. How do you see yourself in that role?
It was obviously something I was up to because I actually had children of my own at quite a young age. As I said, it sort of came through an unhealthy need to escape myself, but I've done enough therapy to be aware of that and make my life manageable. I'm quite concerned that my sons haven't learned from my mistakes because they have landed up getting involved with lots and lots of people and it can be very time consuming. It was an escape for me, but in the last 20 years or so, I've taken a slightly alternative route and stepped down from that. Then I ended up teaching and it made my role official. It gave me a break because I could make my sickness official. It became unmanageable however, because I didn't teach in a way that the institution could handle.

Where did you teach?
At the London College of Fashion. I had 12 glorious years there and I was blessed to come into contact with a lot of great talent through my teaching – some really amazing photographers.

You've been talking about your relationship with your sons, Tyrone and Frank. How did you nurture their own creative dreams and aspirations?
I didn't particularly; they were just in this environment that was all embracing. You know, it's interesting that you draw parallels between my personal life and the sort of creative deconstruction and reconstruction because they are mirror images of each other. I never had any clear boundaries about what was work and what was play. It all became a bit mixed up, but when I started teaching, it gave me a discipline that made my life manageable. By the time I was in my late 30s, it was complete and utter chaos. I had to change things and I discovered that any amount of discipline was going to give me more freedom than not having any discipline at all. I used to think it was the opposite, but having boundaries gives one a sense of security and freedom – and that's what teaching and being a single parent gave me.

This *System* project we've been working on for the past few months will ultimately become the final chapter of the first volume of your archive catalogue. Why the decision to make your work available to a wider public?
A lot of the work – at least half of it – happened in complete and utter chaos. About 20 years ago, my life started to become less chaotic and I began thinking that I needed to get my archive organized. I didn't want to leave a mess for my boys. When I started teaching, they offered me money to process my archive because they wanted to pitch it to the Arts Council and the first strand that I showed was *The Penny and the Postsack*.

Can you explain what that is?
Judy's the penny and Chris is the post sack, and the work I did with them remains the biggest part of my archive and a significant part of my creative career. Judy Blame is the penny because it was an old English penny that he made into a brooch and sold for a pound. I just thought, 'Yeah! He's selling pennies for a pound by putting a pin on the back! A 100% profit, I like it!' Also, just the aesthetic: cheap, easy, quick. As for Chris Nemeth: he didn't know how to make pockets and cuffs, so he'd just find old jackets and then mix them with his paintings and post sacks he found on the streets. I only recently discovered that the penny and the post sack were my own aesthetic, too: cheap, easy and quick!

[1] With its prime location near Hyde Park in Central London, the Park West apartment building was marketed as the 'Gift to Yourself of Happier Living'. In 1936, the complex's services included its own licensed restaurant, a swimming pool, six squash courts, and on-site 'domestic staff service'; annual rent for a one-bedroom flat was £95, or £6,470 in 2019 prices.

[2] Released in January 1975, 'Leggo Skanga' was Jamaican singer Rupie Edwards' follow-up to 'Ire Feelings', his single that reached number nine in the UK charts in November 1974. Both songs feature the repeated refrain 'skanga', and both use the same backing track, 'Everyday Wondering' by Johnny Clarke. Until the 2010s, Edwards ran a record shop on Ridley Road, in Dalston, London.

[3] Toby Andersen's musical career began when he formed Funkapolitan in 1980, an eight-piece funk band from London, whose only album, released in 1982, featured a sleeve designed by Peter Saville. Andersen also played keyboards with British pop band Curiosity Killed the Cat and co-wrote its 1986 UK number-one album *Keep Your Distance*.

[4] Ray Petri is best-known for founding and leading the Buffalo collective and is widely considered to have been one of fashion's first stylists, inventing and pioneering the role. He died of AIDS-related complications in August 1989, aged 41.

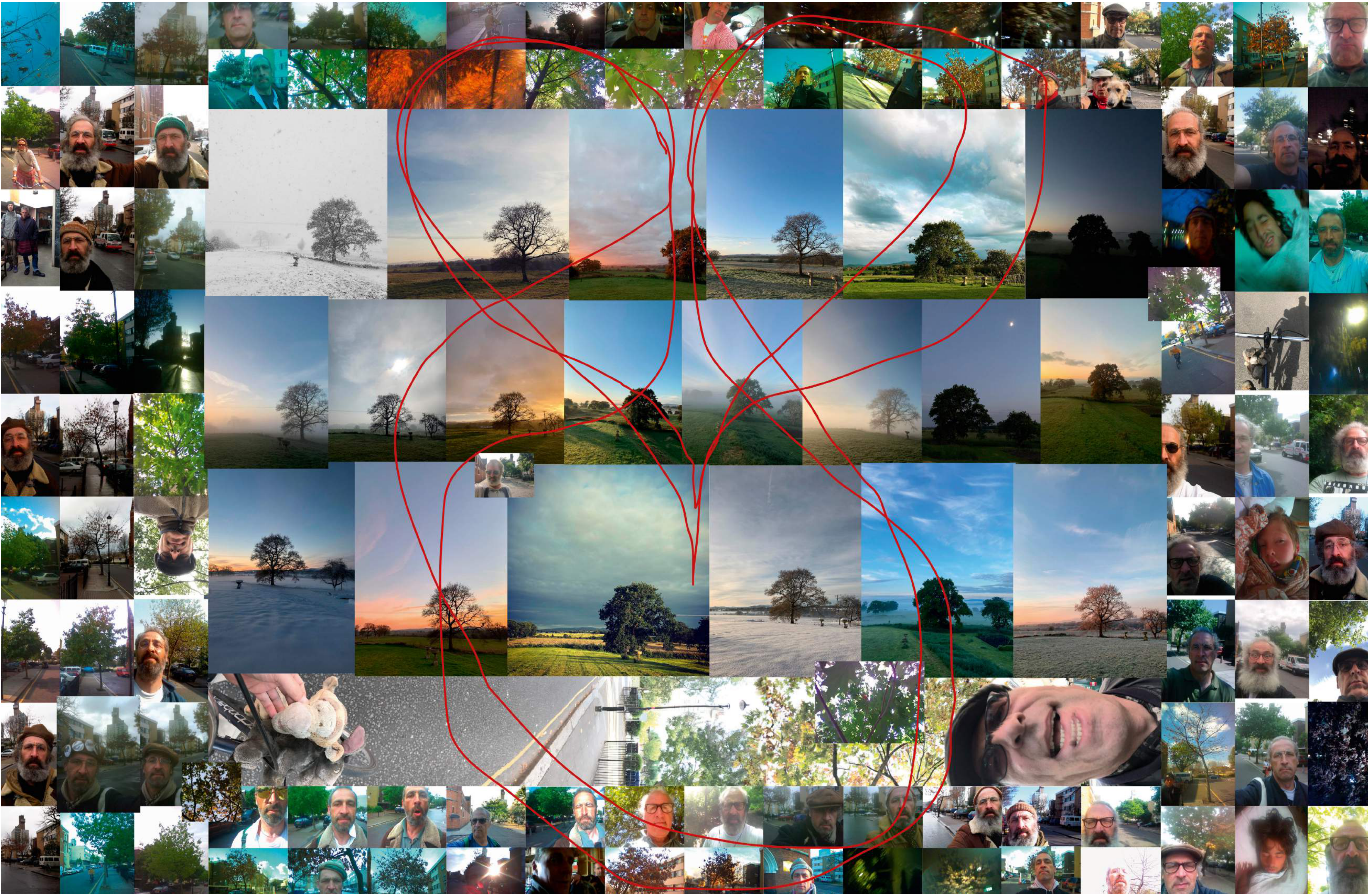
[5] Photographer Roger Charity introduced Ray Petri to the fashion business and the pair worked together regularly during the 1980s. He shot 'The Long Goodbye', the final story Petri styled before his death, which was published in the November 1989 issue of *Arena*.

[6] Carlo Manzi founded his eponymous business renting costumes to theatrical, television and film productions in 1982; it now has a stock of tens of thousands of costumes dating from the 19th century to today.

[7] Named after the Bob Marley song 'Buffalo Soldier', Ray Petri's fashion and music collective created its own rebellious, street, attitude-driven aesthetic backed by bold casting: rather than employ agency models, Buffalo used an often ethnically diverse roster of street-cast men and women, such as Nick and Barry Kamen, Simon de Montford, and a teenage Naomi Campbell.

[8] Under the name Fric and Frack, designers Alan Macdonald and Fritz Solomon made furniture from scavenged materials and were part of East London-based collective House of Beauty and Culture, founded by shoe designer John Moore. Macdonald later became a sought-after film production designer, working with John Maybury and Stephen Frears, with whom he worked on seven films. He committed suicide in 2017.

[9] Born in Tokyo in 1939, Takeo Kikuchi is a Japanese industrial and fashion designer. He began as a costume designer in 1964 and created the successful clothing brands Bigi and Bigi Men's in the early 1970s. He founded an eponymous menswear label in 1984, retired in 2004, only to return as creative director in 2012.



‘We both had a vision, albeit a solipsistic one.’

Mark Lebon and Amanda Harlech in conversation, 26 October 2020. Moderated by Carmen Hall.

It was a Monday morning when Amanda Harlech, Mark Lebon and I got on a Zoom call. Things began in a rather dull and predictably post-weekend mood. Mark had a backache; Amanda had a terrible toothache. She was in the countryside where her horse had lost a shoe and the farrier had arrived just moments before. Furthermore, delivery of the pictures Mark and Amanda had worked on together the previous month was two weeks behind schedule.

Having shot an entire roll of one of the looks – extravagant for Mark – only to find not a single photograph had both the model’s feet and face in focus, Mark had been distraught for days. But on the morning of this interview, Mark and Amanda came to realize that the shoot had come full circle.

Mark finally decided to run two separate pictures of the same Maison Margiela Artisanal look[1] – designed by John Galliano – one with the model’s face in focus; the other with her feet in focus. Though repeating an outfit is something neither Amanda nor Mark like to do, they decided that in this instance it made perfect sense. Mark often listens to a recorded mantra from a body-awareness retreat. The recording repeats, ‘from the tip of your toes...’ which Mark placed on the photo featuring the feet in focus (p.248)... and ‘to the top of your head’, which he added on to the one of her head in focus (p.291). It became an embodiment of Mark and Amanda’s spiritual approach to life: a perceived error turned into a key feature. A representation of the shoot’s celebratory approach to family, ‘realness’, and the passing of time, its exploratory deconstruction of fashion also happened in real life when a family dog idly peed on a piece of couture.

> ‘I remember in the 1980s talking to Mark and being mesmerised by the Christopher Nemeth post-sack jacket and trousers he was wearing.’

Carmen Hall: How did this shoot come about?

Mark Lebon: I bumped into Jerry [Stafford] in January and he asked me what I was up to. I’d spent a year working on making my *Penny and the Postsack* archives[2] into a catalogue and I was interested in the last chapter being an exhibition and a magazine editorial. I was inspired by what Juergen [Teller] was up to; you know, he was the first of my contemporaries who worked in fashion photography and fine-art photography. Using fashion editorial to promote his art exhibitions. I wanted to do something like that, publish a book, create an art exhibit and use a fashion magazine to promote them. Jerry suggested working with *System* on the editorial part and asked me who I’d like to style it. Because I was interested in John Galliano being at Margiela, and because it has also been on my dream list to work with Amanda, I mentioned her. Jerry fixed us all up.

Amanda, when you were fixed up with Mark, what was your impression?

Amanda Harlech: Mark sent me a message describing this cycle of the past, the present and the future, and the last chapter of his book being like the ‘present future’. Resonances of Judy [Blame], Chris [Nemeth] and Mark’s engagement and their work – a deconstruction then a reconstruction – became the genesis for the shoot. There were a lot of conversations when I didn’t understand what I could bring. Initially, I thought I would be styling with John [Galliano], but because of Covid that just wasn’t going to happen. I was really interested in the idea, having not worked with John since 1997, but then it became about working with my daughter Tallulah, which was again exciting because she has a really fresh point of view. A light thrown on top of something that seems to be part of my very being, really.

Mark: One of my dreams in this project was to get together with John and make that link, and we have tentatively done that, because he was a huge part of your family…

Amanda: He was really instrumental in this shoot, because he made sure I got what I wanted from the Maison Margiela Artisanal show, which is intrinsic to this whole legacy of Chris and Judy and Mark, because it was there tangibly in 2020/21. He was like, ‘Yay this is happening!’ And for me that was fantastic.

Mark: I am not someone to repeat outfits in fashion shoots, but we’ve got two fabulous pictures of that look, which in the end is all I really wanted from this, one or two pictures that sort of said it all, and they do.

Mark and Amanda, have you encountered one another regularly throughout the years?

Amanda: There were decades when we didn’t, but I do remember in the 1980s talking to Mark on a street corner and being mesmerised by what he was wearing.

Do you remember what he had on?

Amanda: Christopher Nemeth’s post-sack jacket and trousers. That’s what I remember at least. At the same point I was working with John on *Fallen Angels*[3] and there was just this, like a visual connection to that. We were all going in that direction. You can’t explain why, but it just seems like family, just to bring it back through the family tree to that.

Mark: The amazing thing is with something like Chris’s clothes, if you are into fashion, or John’s clothes, when you see them for the first time you feel so connected at such a deep level. This is someone that you relate to; it is visceral, right there on the surface, and such a profound statement.

Amanda: It’s like recognition and an embrace, it really is like that; it’s like coming home.

Mark: Whenever we did meet, there must have been that thing where on one hand it was incredibly superficial, but on the other hand, the superficial is deeply important as well. A strange duality.

What has the presence of family meant for you in this shoot, Mark?

Mark: Family has always been a priority for me because coming from what people regard as a dysfunctional family, it has always been part of my healing process to deconstruct that, and reconstruct a family. So with my kids it was, you know, I sort of deconstructed and reconstructed my childhood through being part of theirs. I deconstructed and reconstructed my growing-up process with them, too. It was lovely having our kids around on the shoot, too; there is that sense of family, a sensibility and just joy at having them around us. Amanda and I share that.

> ‘With my sons [Tyrone and Frank] I deconstructed and reconstructed my own “dysfunctional” childhood through being part of theirs.’

How does putting a fashion shoot together compare to constructing a family? In a way you’re building a support network and together you make it work.

Mark: Very much. My main partner in crime has been my stylist. I have been out of the ‘fashion family’ business as both my provocateurs, Chris and Judy, have not been part of my life for a while, so this one was about trying to sort out a new family. I think Amanda has been in a different family, too; her fashion family was Karl[4] and other major characters. I had been a bit out of the loop in the old sense, in terms of a close relationship between a stylist and a photographer. I’d been bringing up Frank, teaching, and working on behind-the-scenes movies.

Amanda: We had to jump on this in two weeks! There is something quite innocent about it. And that could be a good thing.

Mark: A really odd selection of people ended up being in this cast, all collaborating. There were some extremely obscure connections and some people who are simply neighbours on my street, due to the current state of affairs, the circumstances that we found ourselves in. The whole appreciation of working with family has been stretched to its outer limits in this story. For me, Amanda has been the first spark of the dream family, because I would have always loved to work with Amanda and to create a sort of fashion-work situation. So that was the spark and as luck would have it, we have managed to hang out a bit together, too. It encouraged me to follow other really, really obscure avenues that I have wanted to resolve, a broader-based family and influences, and stuff like that.

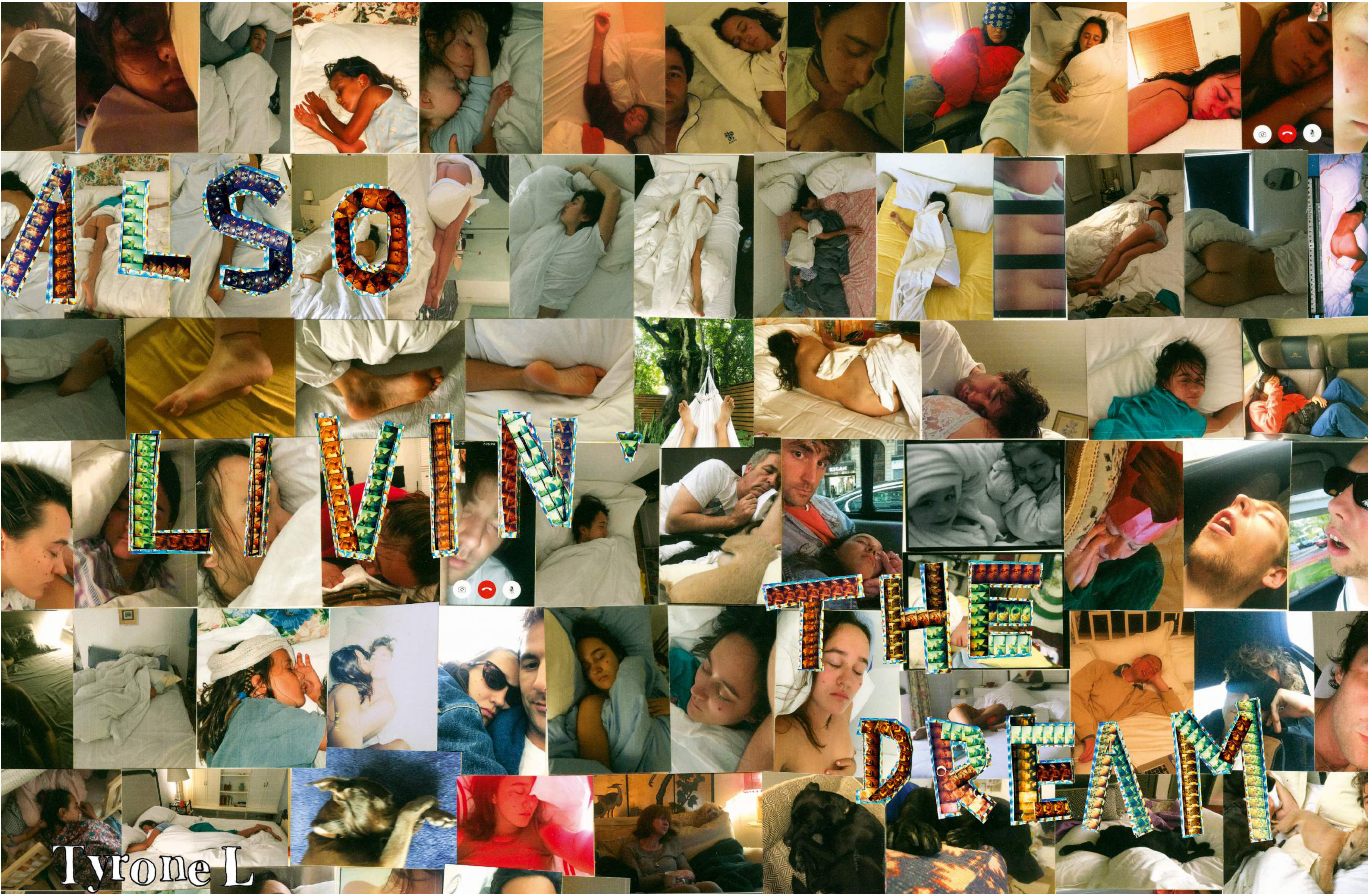
Amanda, how has this project been for you, working with a new fashion family?

Amanda: The idea of family is really important. I wished I could have known everybody we were photographing a bit before actually dressing them, but then maybe not knowing them is a good thing, too. I had to sort of work out the connections between people and also, you know, the idea of who wears what was a spontaneous thing. Everybody was all together dressing themselves, which I think was right. So my experience of the family was intense! There was a process whereby the family was definitely a reconstructed family, a created family.

That sense of openness to improvisation feels related to one of the shoot’s central themes: ‘understanding the problems and living in the solutions.’

Amanda: You have to. If the clothes don’t fit then you have to make do! You can’t be controlling about the spinach, you see. That is where we started.

Mark: Maybe we should tell that story.


ALSO
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In my first conversation with Amanda, I was telling her about how I had put my back out putting coffee grounds on some spinach, trying to stop the slugs from eating the spinach. Then we went rambling on into all kinds of discussion over the next half an hour and Amanda brought the conversation back to that central point – that trying to control the slugs was going to give me a really bad back in the end! That is what we have done with the story: we have let the slugs in and they have done a very fine edit for us. Working with someone on a level where they can interpret and understand your actual being, that is what happened with Judy and Chris and has just by some miracle happened again with Amanda. Letting mistakes in and celebrating what they have to offer, really.

> ‘I don’t like finished polished things. I don’t know why, I suppose it’s like nature: there’s always one leaf that’s dying or a petal that’s shrivelling.’

Has ‘letting the slugs in’ been something you have practiced throughout your career, Amanda?

Amanda: I totally don’t like finished polished things; I don’t know why. I suppose that is like nature. Nothing is polished to a brilliance; there’s always one leaf that’s dying or one petal that’s changing colour, shrivelling. I don’t mean to be negative; I find a beauty in all of that. For me, it has always been about deconstructing things because that releases the spirit of the thing! If it is just an imposed perfection, somehow the heart of the matter escapes me. So, that is just me – an unfinished state!

If you let certain elements of a project take their course, how do you keep it feeling yours?

Amanda: It’s not about just sitting back and letting it happen. You have to allow space for change and change for the good. You can’t just lock it down. I remember the set broke in the wind and well, I actually didn’t mind because it made a really interesting shape. I remember saying, ‘You don’t actually always know what it is going to be, so when something happens you can roll with it.’ I can’t understand how to accept something as it is without deconstructing it and reconstructing it to make it mine.

So is ‘living in the solutions’ about letting go of control?

Mark: There’s this picture of my assistant holding his head in his hands in despair after we had spent two hours trying to mount the camera at a low angle on the floor. It was a moment that quite often happens to me when I am in a really important shoot that means a lot to me, when I just can’t control what is happening. So the lens that I had on the camera just wasn’t right and if I got too low it gave the wrong perspective. It was really getting painful and we had spent an hour and a half on it. Like, this is too painful, it can’t be right. So we lifted the camera and changed the angle to something I hadn’t wanted at all and consequently quite a lot of the shots didn’t turn out how I wanted. So in post-production I had to at least try and fix the pictures so they did some of the things I wanted them to do. It’s that thing of letting go of the control and of what you want, then actually just taking deep breaths and having faith that it will turn out all right.

Amanda: I mean, we both had a vision, albeit solipsistic ones, like, what Mark saw in his head and what I saw in my head. We were both working towards that because I believe that we are both acutely visionary people in that sense... without bigging ourselves up. So when you are working towards something, you know where you are going, which makes the voyage thrilling because you don’t always know what route you are going to take.

Mark: To me, there was a lot of pain involved in actually having to let go of a lot of the pictures that we did downstairs here, where I wasn’t getting what I wanted. I just had to let go and I had to think, it’s not the end of the world, I will sort something out, I need to embrace some of the mistakes. When I first looked at that shoot, I was deeply disappointed with my performance, particularly in the studio. But my boys said, ‘Hey Dad, this whole story is about understanding the problem and living with the solution. Get with the solution, Dad, that is what you are good at.’ And that put a smile on my face. I approached the pictures that I had a problem with, with a different mindset and as I said the spiritual element looked after us and the really key pictures look absolutely stunning. You know, it’s just having that faith to persist and to make the most of every moment that you have got. Not to wallow in the problem, but instead look for the solution. I think the story *does* now have that sense to it.

What was it like establishing a shared vision as collaborators, especially with a newly formed working relationship?

How did you establish the themes of deconstruction, reconstruction, understanding the problems, living in the solution, joy, staying real and living in the dream and time?

Mark: Can I start off by saying that the themes of joy and time were Amanda’s contributions.

Amanda: To help me visualize how I could evoke a shoot for Mark to shoot, I brought in the poem ‘Burnt Norton’, from [T.S. Eliot’s] *Four Quartets*.[5] Initially I just had to find a way in, and that was my way of doing it. We both said we didn’t want it to be a fashion shoot per se, that it was very much about the sense of wearing and that joy of the transformative dream. Which I think you can really see in some pictures, particularly in Dave Baby’s.[6]

Why was now the right time for you both to do this? In a way, I guess it wasn’t.

Amanda: It is never the right time, but it is time. It is never the time to die, or to be born necessarily, so it is about embracing that and embracing the moment.

Speaking more to the future, how do you hope the subjects and the clothes featured in this story will make someone react? What do you hope the reader will think about?

Amanda: Take heart, dress, and investigate what you have already. Deconstruct and reconstruct it for you in this moment and it will always go on, you are not destroying something, it will live on. I really want people to be… inspired has too many capital letters about it, but it would be great if you could open it and look at these images and go, yeah, actually, I’ve got an old jacket I can turn inside out and wear in a different way. And in the process of doing that, it is a discovery about yourself.

And it is better for the earth!

Amanda: And that!

Mark: I would like people to react, again probably too many capital letters and exclamation marks, but… I’d like the first reaction to be, ‘what the fuck?’ But for them also to be stimulated and interested enough to find out ‘what the fuck’. You want to startle, but you also want people to have enough of a sense of identification that they want to investigate more, and feel it. To be both shocked and surprised enough to want to investigate further means you actually become part of the process. My understanding of our art is that it is embodied in the object itself, the viewer, and the creator. There are the pictures, there’s Amanda and me and the rest of the team that has done the creating. Then there is actually your engagement with what is going on! And if you manage to spark those elements, that is what good artistry is about.

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[1] A pea coat from John Galliano’s Autumn/Winter 2020 *Recicla* collection for Maison Margiela Artisanal, embroidered with clear sequins, worn with a white thermocollant dress over transparent tights, a white thermocollant loincloth and white thermocollant ghillies, as well as white painted pointy shoes with white lace-up overlay worn over tweed Tabi boots.

[2] *The Penny and Postsack* is the collection of Mark’s collaborative work with Judy Blame and Christopher Nemeth.

[3] *Fallen Angels* (Spring/Summer 1986) was Galliano’s third collection and inspired by the early 19th-century French Empire. At the show’s finale, the models were doused with water, replicating a fashion of that period in history, when gowns were wetted so they clung to the body like robes in classical Greek statues. This practice led to a deadly outbreak of pneumonia among aristocrats at the time.

[4] Amanda Harlech began working as a consultant stylist for Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel in 1997, and remained so until Lagerfeld’s death in 2019. She told *W* in 2012 that, ‘His intellectual and spiritual bravery often hide his poetry.’

[5] First published in 1936, T.S. Eliot’s poem ‘Burnt Norton’ was later included as the opening poem in *Four Quartets* (1943). The poem, which deals with notions of original sin, childhood and temporality, famously begins: ‘Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past.’

[6] Dave Baby is an artist and sculptor of genitalia-themed wooden carvings. Mark Lebon has known Baby and collected his work since the pair were part of the creative collective, House of Beauty and Culture, which ran from 1986 to 1989.

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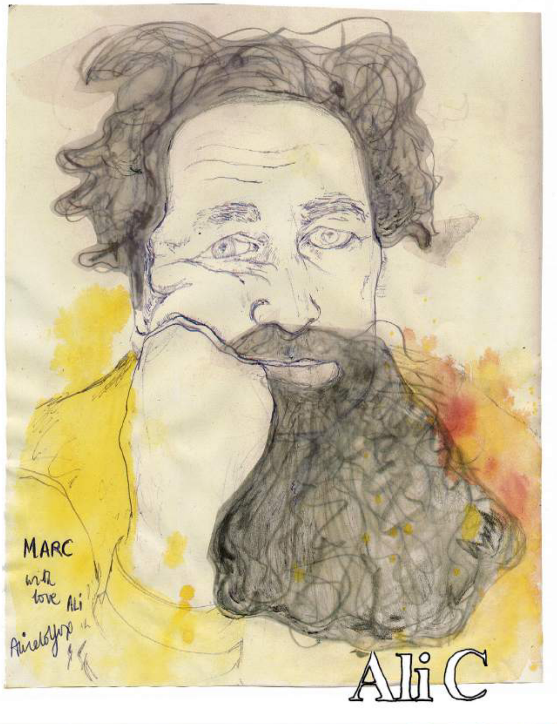
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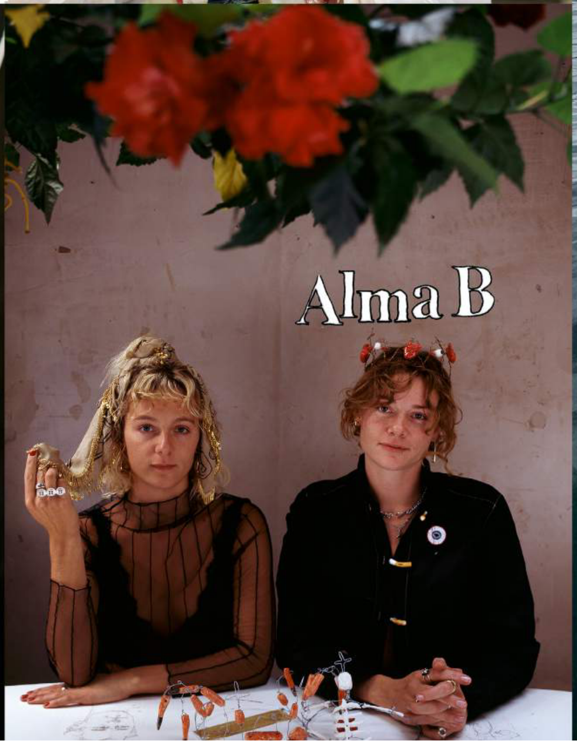
Alma B

Monday, Nov. 2, 2020
Dorset

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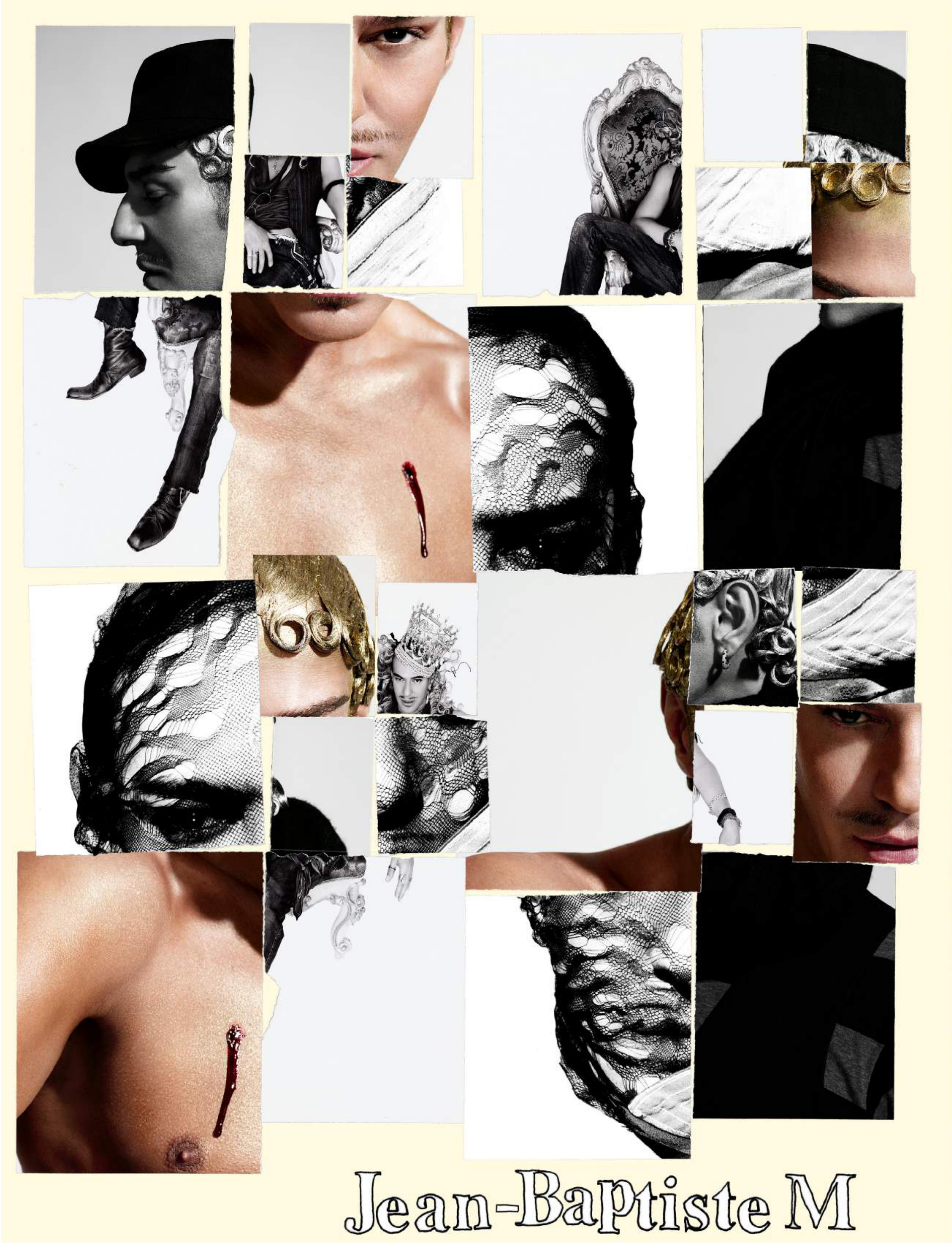
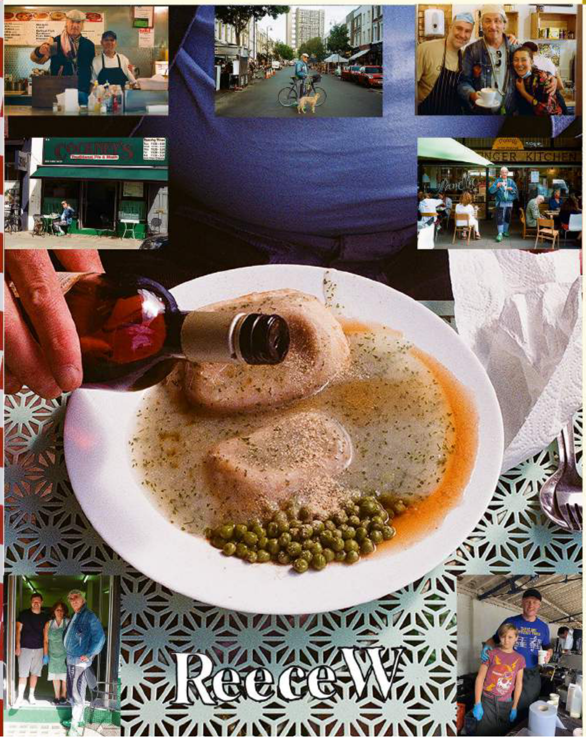

Jean-Baptiste M

Me reflecting on the most beautiful in every way day I can remember at Pariki
A sunny Sunday at the restaurant in late Autumn is pretty close to as good as it gets
for me: warm and breezy, full to brimming with pomegranates and pumpkins, toasting nuts and shallots baking in sweet vinegar. Jaime arrives with a crate of lemons
from the hills and tales of mushroom hunting whilst my favourite new friend Rober
plays his flamenco guitar on the deck. Behind me Vicki and Frances cook and chat,
out front a sea of people sit softly spangled by the special time they are sharing against
the backdrop of the sea sitting like placid lake. All of it imperfectly playing out just as
it should on a small spot on the planet to come and enjoy the simple things
in the comfort of others.

Constantly constructing pile ups of mutually beneficial ingredients, every new order
a fresh opportunity to make the dish more beautiful and delicious than the one before, every ingredient at its peak season plumpness, rolling with what's at its finest and
celebrating it till its last breath. That is my joy, because the final destination of all this
beauty is to feed the body of another in the knowledge that the food they eat is just
about as good for them as it could possibly be, head and heart and tummy.

Shallots roasted in sweet vinegar and sage -
the most direct sensory highway to Sunday lunch nostalgia
8/10 banana shallots half a cup of red wine vinegar
half a cup of olive oil, bunch of sage
2 tbs granulated sugar, 1 tbs sea salt
Peel the shallots and lie them in a baking paper lined roasting tin
so they sit snugly together
Pick the sage leaves off the branch and tuck them under the shallots
Pour over the red wine vinegar, olive oil
sprinkle with sea salt and sugar
Roast in the oven at 200 until they are caramel like, sticky and busting open,
you need to roll them around a couple of times whilst they cook
Eat with sheeps cheese or sausages, in a ham sandwich the next day or sliced up and
tossed into warm lentils with parsley as a salad.



Resident permit holders only
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Mon – Fri
30am – 6.30pm
Restrictions apply on August Bank Holiday Sat, Sun & Mon 8.30 am to 10.30 pm
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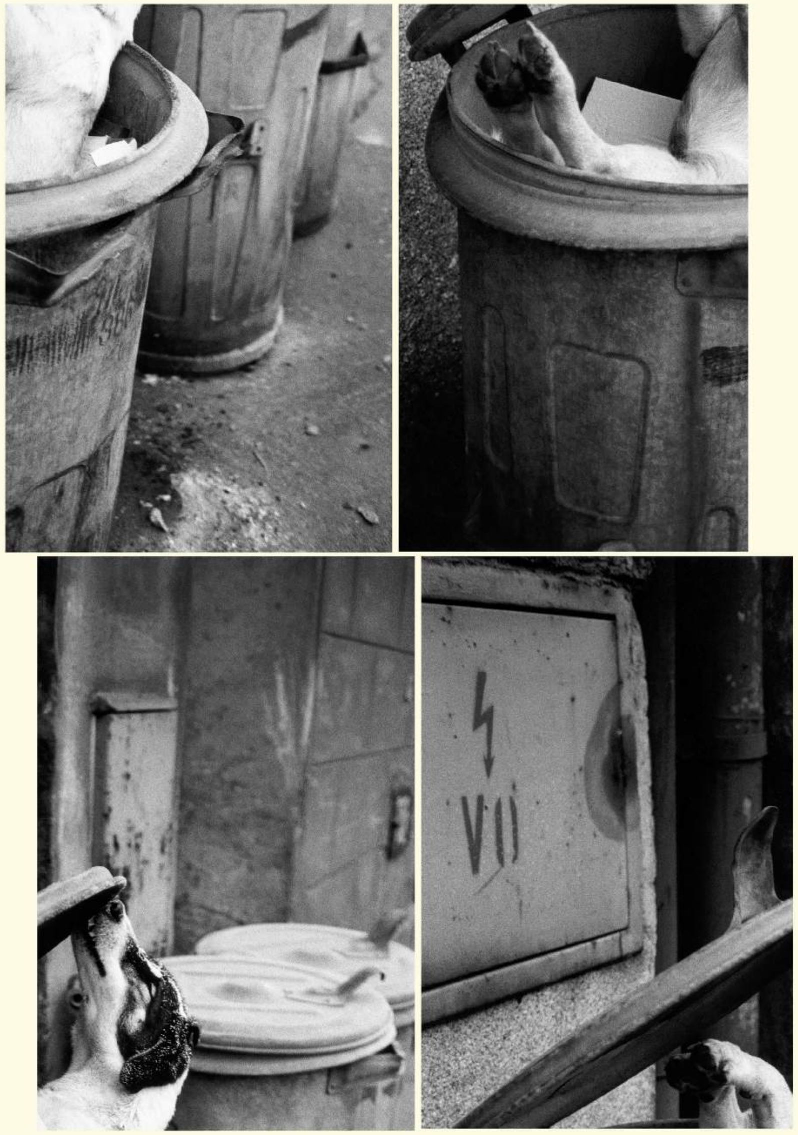

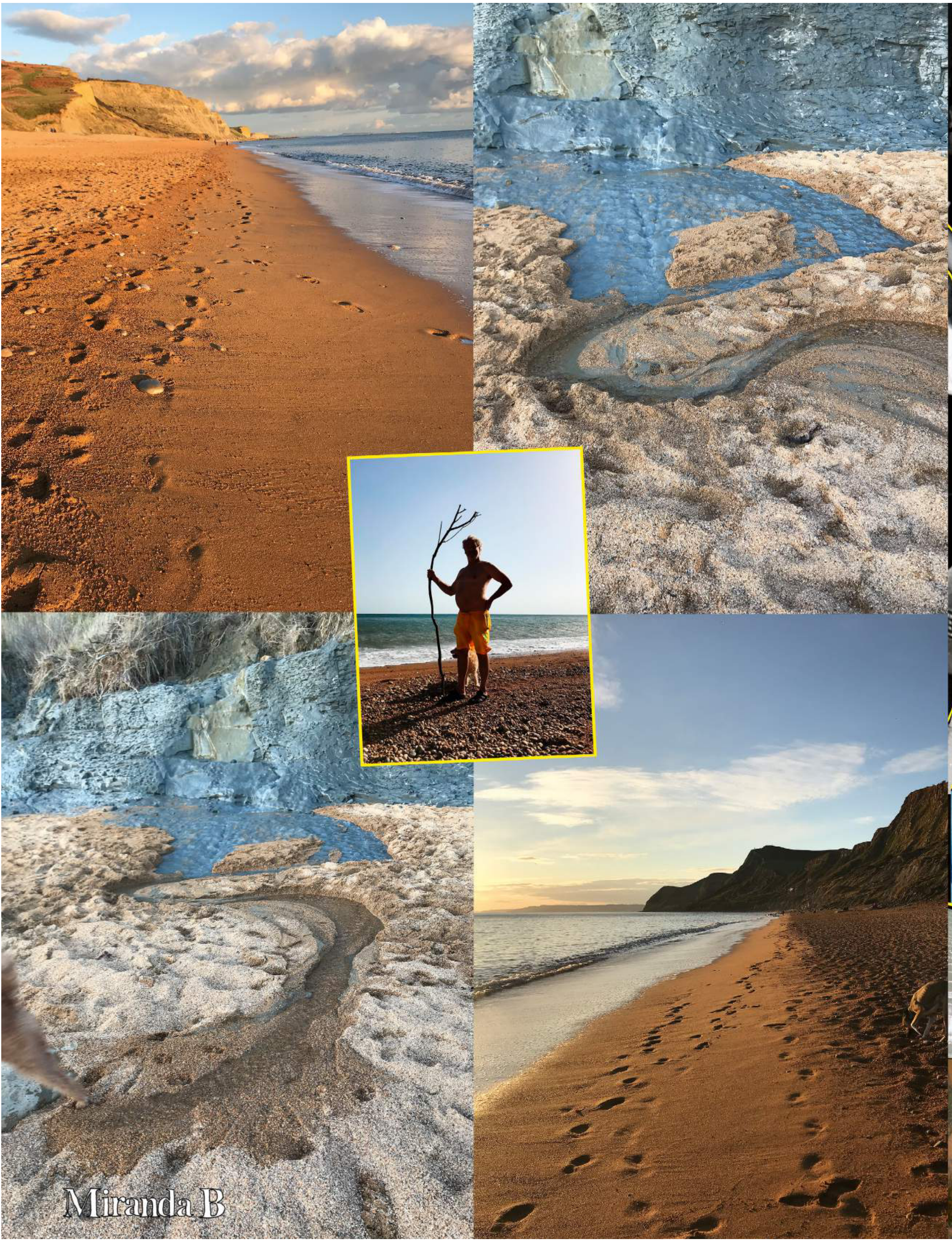
Miranda B

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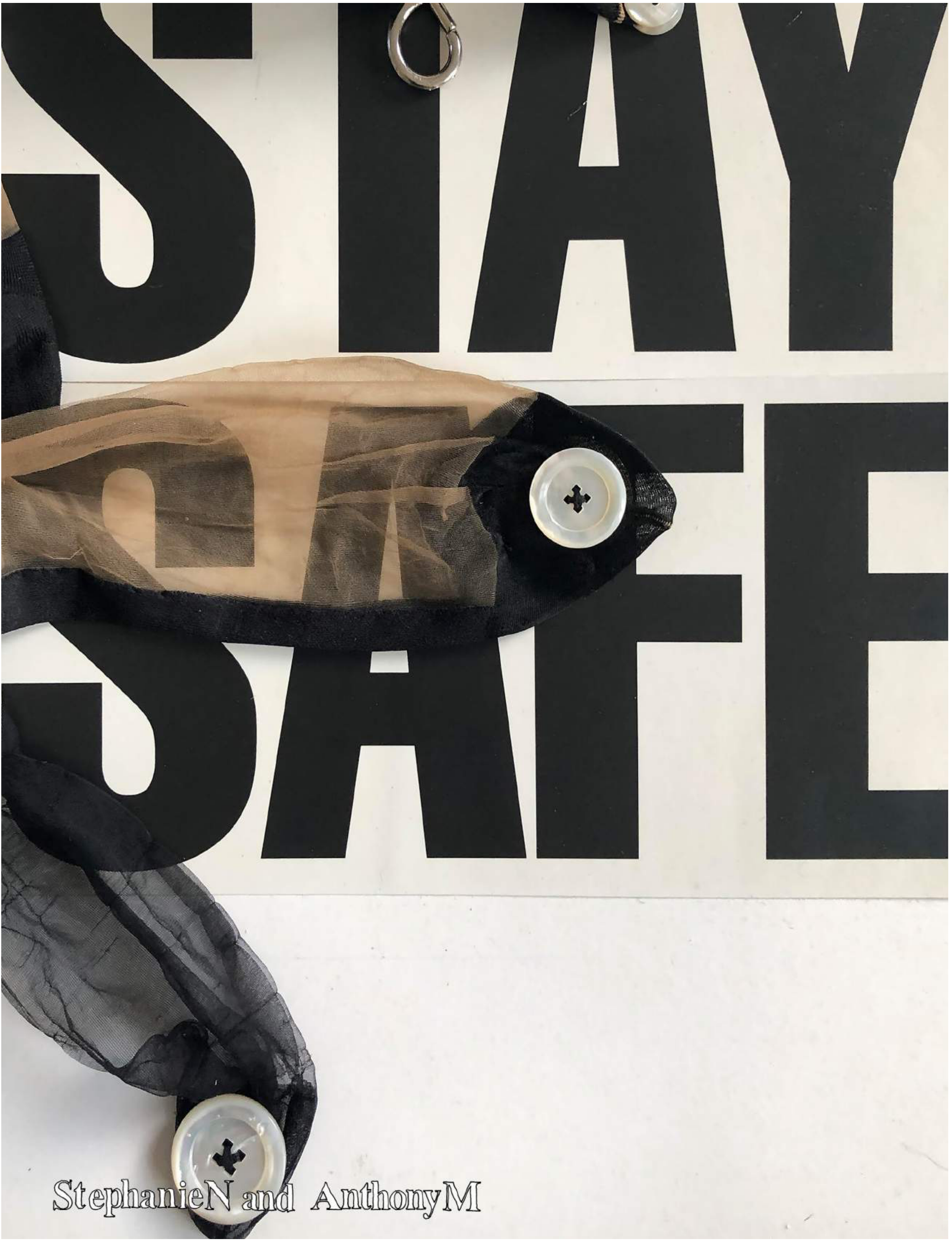


I haven't met anyone more eccentric than Mark. I'm both intimidated by him and drawn to him in equal measure. It's not least the sheer size of the man and that massive voice of his! He can be ominous and complicated but completely loving all at the same time. I think of Mark like a series of dreams, and he endures in my mind quite simply because of the depth of his creativity. The pictures, his writing, it all marked me. What he is and what he celebrates so ineffably is something I yearn to be but never can – to be free!
David Sims, photographer

Knowing Mark has been one of the most defining relationships of my career: I wouldn't be who I am today without him or the Crunch family. I love him and I love them. Mark's approach to life and work is creative original chaos. With him, everything seemed possible.
Camilla Lowther, talent agent

I was a kid when I first saw Mark's work in *i-D*; every time I was drawn to an image it was one of his. His work was really exciting and there was a certain energy and dynamic that I loved. When I did the Christopher Nemeth collection at Louis Vuitton [Autumn/Winter 2015], I wanted to involve Christopher's extended family members to reflect the true spirit of his work, people like Judy Blame and of course, Mark, who did these really fun little films, which had the essence of his own earlier work. His aesthetic is raw, and I like it when things aren't totally perfect sometimes. And of course, there is an eccentricity to his work that makes it very English; something you can't get from any other country.
Kim Jones, artistic director, Dior Men & Fendi

Mark is a true original. His work is full of energy and experimentation, and what he's brought to fashion is a sense of fearlessness. I remember being so impressed watching him take a beautiful picture and cut it up with scissors!

I first met him when he was at *i-D*, so I must have been 17, modelling and going to college. I'd just gone into fashion the year before and Crunch was an entry into this world that I very much wanted to be part of. Around that time, I left home, as did Kate [Moss], and Mark created a sense of family for us all; Crunch became a second home. It was such a creative place, and I swear there was a party there every week. Baillie [Walsh] would be there, Kate [Moss], Mario Sorrenti, Neneh Cherry, Glen [Luchford]; there were always models around: Nick Kamen, Barry Kamen. It was very West London, but it was international, too. Mark would be floating around the room, making sure you were looked after, and having fun.

I remember those moments fondly. I was so young and insecure, but Mark always made me feel like I was special, made me feel confident. He encouraged me; nothing I did was wrong. He was one of the best teachers and one of the best photographers I have worked with, along with Steven Meisel and Paolo [Roversi]. They all teach you – they see your talent and help you become the best version of yourself.
Edward Enninful, OBE, editor-in-chief, *British Vogue*

Mark and the world of Crunch is a bit like a small family circus where he's both ringmaster and head clown. It's his generosity that endures; there is always space for me at the family table. Mark's approach to life can be summed up by him taking fabulous pictures – with no film in the camera.
Dave Baby, artist

> **'With fearless, organized chaos and impeccable taste, he's created an aesthetic that mirrors his way of life.' Mario Sorrenti, photographer**

I see Mark's work as being a completely personal journey. His way of deconstructing and reconstructing to gain truth in his work – which he always refers to as the 'mash-up' – is unique and iconic. His process is like no other. His mind is really out of this world. As a result of this fearless, organized chaos, combined with impeccable taste, he has created an individual aesthetic that mirrors his way of life. Through his studio, so appropriately named Crunch, he has carved out an authentic documentation of fashion and his life, beginning in the mid-1980s up until now. Over the course of the years he has managed to remain faithful to his vision, and that is what's so enduring and inspiring about his work.

I met Mark in the early 1990s. I was about 19 and had gone to London to live and to do some modelling, and I ended up living with him for about five years. We became close friends in that time. That was where I began my photography career and I've always thought of Mark as a sort of mentor. I was witness to a pure artist: someone I find inspiring in the way his mind works, in the way that he looks at things from a unique perspective, the way he thinks about life and art, and how it all becomes one. He truly lives to understand who we are as

individuals and as artists, through our best efforts and failures. Only through that process do we realize our full potential for growth. As a young man, this experience was crucial to liberating my mind and creativity.
Mario Sorrenti, photographer

What has always excited me about Mark's work is his unprecious approach. All that experimentation: double exposures, cutting up negatives, re-photographing prints; it was beautiful, groundbreaking stuff. Not everything worked, but that was also what made it great. Mark wasn't afraid to fail, which is a real strength, and what makes his work so enduring. Plus, shooting with Mark was never dull. Every shoot felt like a happening or a party. There were always people wandering through, popping into Crunch to just hang out: Ladbroke Grove trendies, local Rastas, dogs, long low-rider Cadillacs, beautiful models, sometimes great food, eccentric plumbing arrangements. Occasionally, they'd end up in the shoot although that hadn't been the plan. It was a fantastical place to shoot: chaotic and beautiful, with Mark as ringmaster.
Simon Foxton, stylist

> **'Crunch was London's equivalent of the Factory, where everything and anything seemed possible.**
> **Zoe Bedeaux, stylist**

I knew of Mark by reputation for many years before we met: he was the coolest, most stylish, and unnervingly individual West London hero. When he first asked me out to dinner I was overexcited. After dinner he told me he had something for me and, whipping out a Swiss Army knife, he sliced the tongue off one of his high-top trainers and presented it to me like most guys would a petrol-station rose!

Mark's influence on me was enormous. With him, everything was new and exciting, with the coolest parties full of people whose names I knew from work, but wasn't hip enough to have met. Ray Petri, James Lebon, Michael Kopelman, Judy Blame, the Kamens, Dick Jewell and Rachel Auburn, Neneh Cherry and Cameron McVey, Janet Street-Porter, Lynne Franks. Crunch was the most thrilling place *ever*; there were hammocks everywhere and the bed doubled up as the dining-meeting-room table.

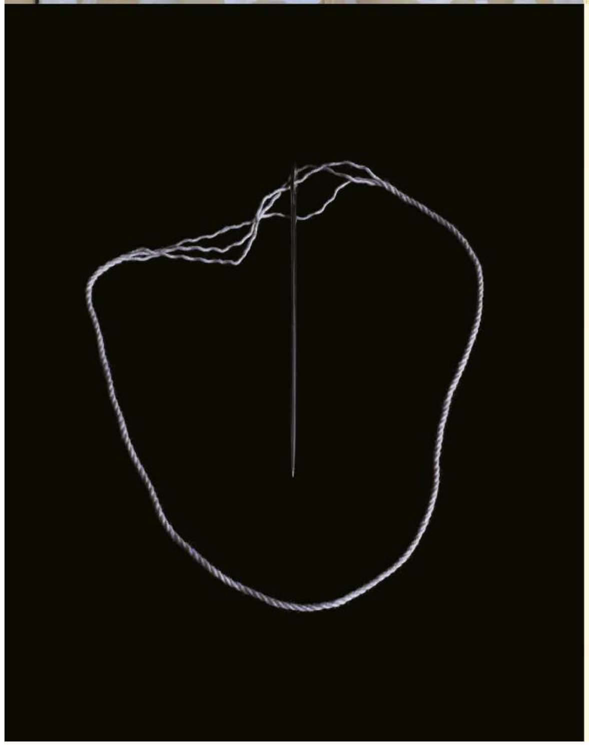
I was pretty nervous the first time I took Mark up to meet my super-straight parents in Scotland. Rather concerned about the European flag Mark was wearing as a wrap-around skirt with Nike high-tops and a Pucci head scarf, I accidentally drove his 1964 Impala into a ditch and my Dad had to tow us out by tractor. After coming out to greet us, Mum exclaimed loudly how beautiful the exotic flowers carved into the customised wooden back of the Impala were. In actual fact, she was complimenting an array of different genitalia including massive dicks and strange looking girl-bits, which Mark had commissioned from artist Dave Baby. Mark is a true original.
Camilla Arthur, casting agent

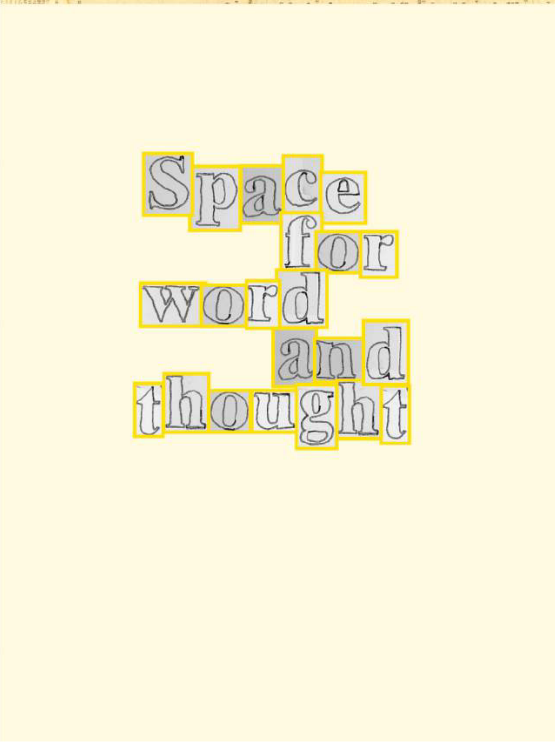
Mark Lebon, aka, Big Papa Bear! Lover of fashion. Caring and kind. Crunch! Being in that environment always seemed to bring out the best in the collaborators who were captured by Mark's lens. He was always experimenting, cutting and mashing things up. There was always a feeling of belonging; you felt like being at a social club. It was an extended fashion fam. All these curious creative minds being encouraged to be different.
Johnnie Sapong, hairstylist

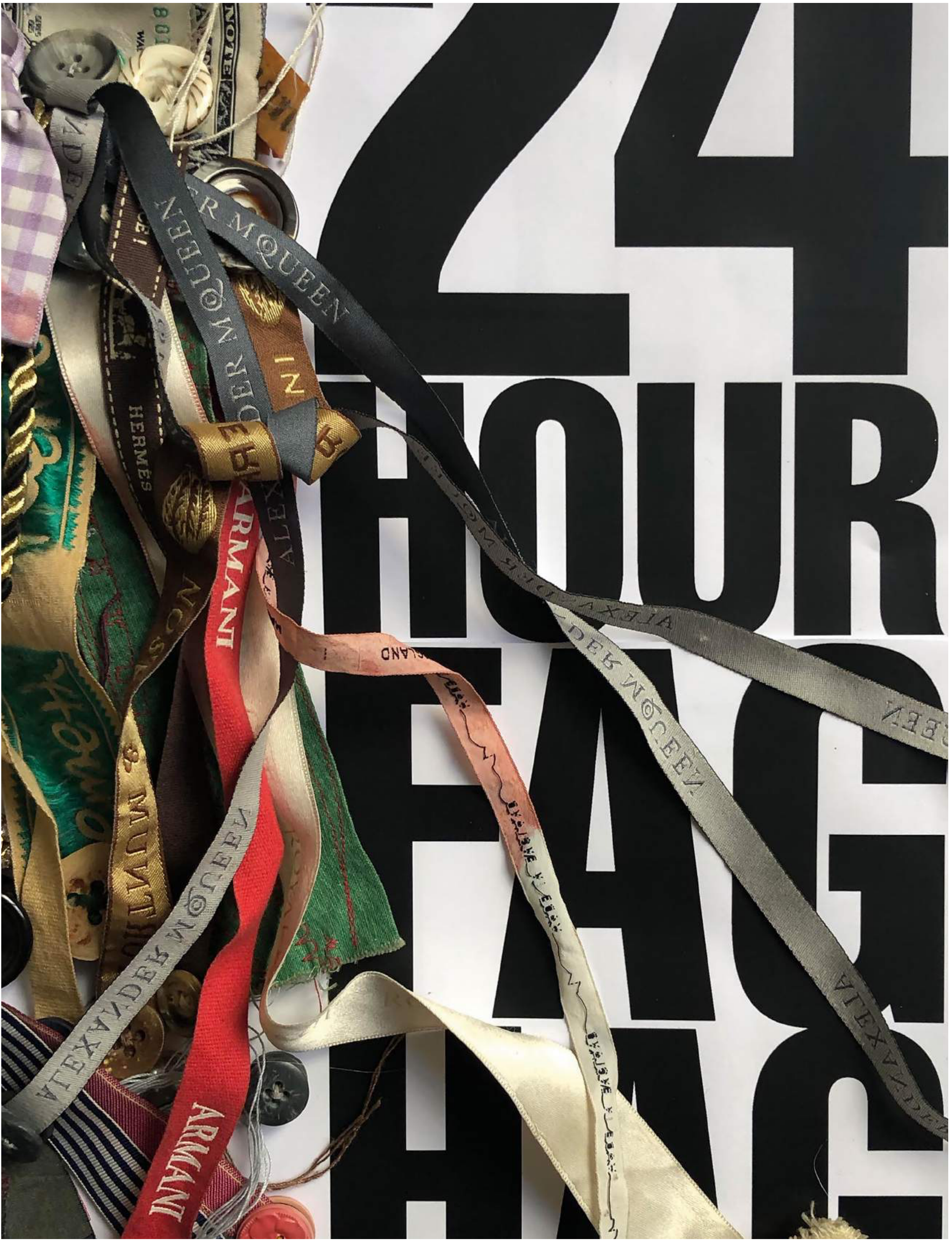
I've always found Mark confusing because my brain isn't as big as his! His spirit is real and soulful – it's always from the heart. Crunch was Mark: a collab, you got involved, you became a part of it, it got chaotic, you worked it out and eventually you ended up with an enduring result. Mark is a gatherer, a lover, a giver, a documenter; he is a forceful creative soul and I love him.
Jeny Howorth, model and artist

Mark's an artist, but what I love about him is that he'd be really offended by that description. His work has never looked like anybody else's or followed any trend; his vision of beauty is totally unique. When I first started buying *i-D* in the 1980s, I couldn't believe he was getting his work published. American magazines were full of black-and-white images of clean über-women like Cindy Crawford, whereas Mark's pictures were cut to pieces, had Gooey tape all over them, and were totally reconfigured. Yet they were still so striking.

When I was first walked into Crunch in the 1980s, it was this crazy garage-studio full of lights and cameras, all very homemade. The place was full of cannabis smoke and an array of cool-looking people hanging around, with dub music blasting from the speakers. Tatjana Patitz was there, a few Buffalo boys, and a Jamaican lady was cooking lunch on a barbecue. I







didn't really know what I'd walked into, but I knew I needed to be a part of it. Later on, when I lived with Mark, he had a massive influence on the way I think. Morning tea would turn into a therapy session. I was once sulking, because someone had been critical of my work and Mark said, 'Ah, but that's beautiful; now you're feeling something and it's *real*. Be grateful.' On another occasion I was complaining about the rain in England, and Mark said, 'If you can't learn to love the grey days, then you should fuck off out the country.' He was right. I packed my bags, left, and never looked back.
Glen Luchford, photographer

Mark is reverent and irreverent in equal measure. He exists in the space of tension between things, more so than in the balance. Despite the strong social and cultural pressures at the time, Mark seemed to know early on that the pursuit of wealth would never make him happy. That's not to say Mark is unsuccessful in the world's terms, he clearly isn't; it's more that that was never his goal. Rather, Mark's values lie in relationships and creativity, with family being of paramount importance. I have witnessed Mark as a son, a brother, a lover, a father and a friend. His sense of family extends to his friendships; he is intense, fierce and loyal.

'American magazines featured Cindy Crawford, whereas Mark's pictures were cut to pieces and had tape all over them.' Glen Luchford, photographer

I liked the way Mark cared so much about making Crunch somewhere that expressed something personal. More importantly, it was a space for people to be together, and the Crunch project was about building a creative community. In these lonely distant technological times, it feels like a relevant and vital ambition. What are we without our community?
Cindy Palmano, photographer

Mark is a fantastic artist whose generosity of spirit floods his pictures as much as it's always filled the lives of everyone around him. He's really smart but wears his intelligence lightly. His seriousness and skill as a photographer is always balanced by his easy-going friendliness. He's just a really good bloke.
John Maybury, filmmaker

Mark Lebon is a complete one-off! There is a spiritual quality to his visual language; it's raw and visceral. It speaks directly and cuts the crap! Crunch was London's equivalent of the Factory where everything and anything seemed possible. It was also Mark's home, which he opened up to us all, like an unofficial cultural and community centre. A big garage situated in a totally random residential street; I always wondered what the neighbours thought. Mark threw the best parties, everyone was welcome; he brought all walks of life together. All hail the Big Lebonski!
Zoe Bedeaux, stylist

Mark is a true artist with no ego. His freedom and fearless mind are what have most influenced me. When I think of him, I think first of his deep and kind voice, his size, his poetry, his kindness and craziness. Back in the day, we were all obsessed with fashion, fame and money, but not Mark. He was a dreamer, pushing for his own personal vision. And his Crunch studio was messy and unorganized, like a magic voodoo cave.
Jean-Baptiste Mondino, photographer

Mark is a beautiful, open-hearted, socialist radical who I love and hold dearly as my friend. His energy and commitment to his work, with his principles of high standards with no rules, make him wonderful to work alongside, and have brought many like-minded spirits together.

His approach to life is as complicated as life itself, and as contradictory. In our film *Head2Head*, he says: 'I'm angry, and I do get angry, but I'm quite alright with it. I think being able to accept that is part of who I am has actually made me a more loving person, but all that sounds a bit suspect.' That goes some way to summing up Mark and is part of the reason that I and many others accept and love him.
Dick Jewell, filmmaker

Mark is a pirate and a force of nature. He allows his ideas to flow unfettered, which can initially seem chaotic until you see the connections between seemingly unconnected objects, people and circumstances. His enduring strength is his ability to continue to generate ideas and images with indefatigable enthusiasm and freshness. Mark has always created a sense of family and when you collaborate with him, it feels inclusive, secure and reassuring. This also makes everyone strive to achieve the very best result.
Stephanie Nash, graphic designer, Michael Nash Associates

One day we were in the studio shooting Nick Kamen with Ray Petri. Mark was using instant film that we could process in two minutes on this tiny machine. When the strip of film came out, Mark cut it up and selected his favourite shot. In all the chaotic madness of the shoot the favourite select went missing. We spent ages looking for it. In the end we found it stuck on the sole of Mark's boot. He had walked all over it and it was scratched and beaten up! Ray was stressed as that was the killer shot, but Mark loved the scratches, the dirt, the accident. In the end that image was the coolest shot ever taken of Nick Kamen and was used as the cover of his album [*Whatever, Whenever*]. That really exemplifies Mark's genius. He never likes to work within a safe space; he likes it when anything can happen, the accident. Because the truth is, life is messy, so it's a more honest approach than looking to clean it up.
Jamie Morgan, photographer

Mark's spirit and work is passionate, full of attitude, and immense order cleverly disguised as chaos, calm through loudness, beauty beyond measure.
Cameron McVey, music producer

> **'What Mark is and what he celebrates so ineffably is something I yearn to be but never can – to be free!' David Sims, photographer**

Mark is beautifully anarchic and deeply soulful. His most enduring strength is his belligerent, relentless kindness, which is turbo-charged by his huge heart. I'm shit at anecdotes, but isn't it great that you're always looking forward to having a reason to pass through Crunch and live a new one?
Neneh Cherry, musician

I was still at St Martin's when I first met Mark Lebon at the *i-D* office, which at the time was just Terry Jones' house in West Hampstead. Mark had just shot Madonna for the cover of the magazine [March/April 1984 issue] and I was doing the layout with Terry. This was before Madonna released 'Like a Virgin' and she was only known to club goers at the time; Terry didn't even put her name on the cover.

Later that year, Neville Brody, the incredible art director of *The Face* magazine, came to the St Martin's degree show and offered me a job assisting him. That's how I got to know Mark. I went on to commission him many times and each time was somehow wildly eventful. His style was known as 'mash up' – layering transparencies and images – but it was not only the pictures that left an impression on me, it was also the attitude he brought to his work. He always exuded a nonchalant and shambling cool; a handsome big bear with a friendly booming voice, who hung out with a cool group of models, creatives and stylists like Judy Blame, which all evolved into the legend that is Crunch.
Robin Derrick, creative director

Mark looks like what he creates: a paradoxical 'mash' of seemingly creative chaos and considerably deeper thought. Simple and complex. A deconstructor, reconstructor. He was a fully fledged energy in that hyper-creative period following the reactionary outburst of punk and before the smothering grey fire blankets of brand and label. Before the diversity of style became homogenous fashion. He was about DIY and experimentation; not giving a fuck *and* giving a shit; daring to do; the ethos of punk but deliberate, considered, by design. The ripples of which we now unknowingly still bob gently in today.

In many ways, Crunch and its idea of a genuine creative laboratory have been the most enduring legacy and something desperately missing from now. Sharing, inspiring, allowing, daring, liberating, teaching, discovering: a true idea of collectivity and connectivity in the interest of creativity, the antithesis of today's calculating 'collaborators'.
Mark Mattock, photographer

I first met Mark in early 1987 with stylist Ray Petri when they both invited me on an *Arena* shoot they were doing. They were so sweet to me; I just watched. The experience had a big impact on me; it felt very chaotic but at the same time very professional. There was this whole community and Mark or Zoe [Bedeaux]'s mum invited me for that famous Jamaican barbecue chicken on Saturday afternoons. Whenever I was invited to those parties, it was a happy time. Lots of kids were running around, so many mixed races, different haircuts, flamboyant strange clothes, famous people, everyone seemed to be doing something interesting and everyone was so very friendly. For me, coming from a village near a forest in Germany, hardly speaking English, all of it was totally new to me. It was an eye-opener – and Mark was at the centre of it all. His work is like his house, his own fairy-tale den.
Juergen Teller, photographer

Juergen Teller
Portrait of Mark Lebon by Juergen Teller.
Creative partner Dovile Drizyte.

Lily Colfox
THEGOODTEMPLEFORTRUTHLOVELUSTLIFE+LIES
(Portrait of Crunch) by Lily Colfox.

Left: Hugo Scott
Metallika Ball 2016-2018
Photographs by Hugo Scott. Mashed by Mark Lebon.
Special thanks to Kamari Miyake Mugler.

Right: Yvonne Gold
Eggs – One Heart: Frozen Fluid
Creative direction by Yvonne Gold. Photograph by Milo Reid.
Set design by Brad Gilbert.

Left: Nick Knight
Photographs & text by Nick Knight. Clockwise from top left: 'Spinning Hats', Kirsten Owen for Yohji Yamamoto, 1987. Jazzelle Zanaughtti wearing Comme des Garçons, 2016. 'Punk', Sarah Campbell, *The Face*, 1986. Erin O'Connor for Christian Dior Haute Couture, 2001.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Mark Lebon, Tyrone Lebon & Frank Lebon wear 'arswipe' T-shirt by Dave Baby; Amanda Harlech and Tallulah Harlech wear their own clothes.

Left: Riyo Nemeth
Artwork by Riyo Nemeth.

Right: Lui Nemeth & Christopher Nemeth
Three Graces, 2020
Artwork by Lui Nemeth & Christopher Nemeth.

Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Georgia Howorth wears dark blue heroic-cut Recicla pea coat embroidered with clear material sequins, worn with a white thermocollant dress over transparent tights, a white thermocollant loincloth and white thermocollant ghillies, and white painted pointy shoes with white lace-up overlay worn over tweed Tabi boots, Maison Margiela Artisanal by John Galliano, Autumn/Winter 2020.

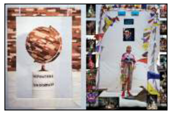
Right: Jeny Howorth
Judy, collage, by Jeny Howorth. Photograph by Mark Lebon.
Jeny wears unique Michael Kopelman shirt.

Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Clockwise from top left: Alice Colfox wears an organza shirt with hand-stitched ribbons and waistcoat by John Galliano, *Les Incroyables*, 1984, and snakeskin slingback boots by John Galliano, *Honcho Girl*, 1991, both from the Harlech Archive.
Kailash Bharti wears a velvet ribbed high-neck top with cotton poplin balloon sleeves, and wool trousers with drawstring legs, both Loewe, Spring/Summer 2021, Mark Lebon's boots, and his own necklace.
Lily Colfox wears a ruffle dress by Comme des Garçons, 2002, from Steven Philip Studio, and white tights and swan-feather headpiece, both from the Harlech Archive.
Tessa Edwards wears a knit waistcoat by John Galliano, *Ludic Game*, Autumn/Winter 1985, from Steven Philip Studio, jewellery by Tessa Edwards, and her own shoes.

Right: Jason Evans
Photograph by Jason Evans.

Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Guillaume André wears jacket by Christopher Nemeth from the Christopher Nemeth Archive, T-shirt by Available Nowhere, safety-pin scarf by Judy Blame × Dior, military trousers from the Harlech Archive, and Mark Lebon's boots. Georgia Howorth wears white polyester and polyurethane jacket by Comme des Garçons, Autumn/Winter 2020, from Dover Street Market, a paper and gaffer-tape skirt, and upcycled shoes by Helen Kirkum.

Right: Mark Mattock
Photographs of Judy Blame by Mark Mattock.
Mashed by Mark Lebon.



Left: Yvonne Gold
Still-In a Spin: Grounded
Creative direction by Yvonne Gold. Photograph by Milo Reid.
Set design by Brad Gilbert. Plasters by Tru-Colour Bandages.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Main photograph by Mark Lebon. Inset photograph by Morgan White. Carmen Hall wears Dr. Noki's NHS Custom Street Couture. NHS crew: Kim Howells, Carley Hague, Rockey Hook, Janetta, Tazler, Bail100. 123 Ross from LMB textile recycling. Platform by Dazed Digital.

Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Dave Baby wears Hardy Amies Harris tweed jacket with his own custom stencil print. Georgia Howorth wears 'arswipe' T-shirt by Dave Baby.

Right: Else Korsvoldgard
Photography by Dag Thorenfeldt.

Jason Evans
Photography by Jason Evans.

Left: Taque Hirakawa
Original text by Taque Hirakawa.
Additional text by Mark Lebon.

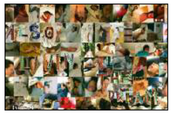
Right: Michael Kopelman
Mark Lebon's *The Penny and the Postsack* T-shirt archive and unique soldier incense holder by Michael Kopelman.

Left: Yvonne Gold
Who Am I: Refresh-Breath
Creative direction by Yvonne Gold. Photograph by Milo Reid.
Set design by Brad Gilbert.

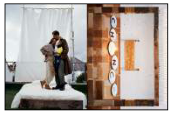
Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Frank Lebon wears white cotton utility shirt from Japan, trousers by Dior by John Galliano from *Clochard*, Haute Couture 2000, from the Alexander Fury Archive, Marc Lebon's boots, a penny brooch by Judy Blame, and a hat from the Harlech Archive. Carmen Hall wears upcycled Maison Martin Margiela dress by Sophia Fish for So Far, a deconstructed, reconstructed waistcoat and frock coat and hat from the Harlech Archive, and shoes by Ancuta Sarca.

Frank Lebon
Photographs and collage by Frank Lebon.

Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photographs by Mark Lebon and Amanda Harlech. Collage by Mark Lebon.



Tyrone Lebon
Photographs and collage by Tyrone Lebon.



Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Tyrone Lebon wears military great coat from the Harlech Archive, penny brooch by Judy Blame, Joy T-shirt by DoBeDo, Mark Lebon's vintage Maharishi khaki trousers, Mark Lebon's boots and European Union flag. Lily Gavin wears light-brown finely striped jacket with curved and ruched patch pockets, double breasted with plasticine buttons, elasticated ruched and gathered band down the back, with bias-bound internal seam finishes, by John GalIano, *Fallen Angels*, Spring/Summer 1986, from Steven Philip Studio, post-sack linen trousers by Christopher Nemeth from the Christopher Nemeth Archive, and slingback boots by Patrick Cox for John Galliano, *Fallen Angels*.

Right: Yvonne Gold
Re-Generation: Warmth
Creative direction by Yvonne Gold. Photograph by Milo Reid. Set design by Brad Gilbert.

Left: Alice Colfox
Top left: portrait of Mark Lebon by Alice Colfox.

Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Top right: Photograph by Mark Lebon. Alice Colfox wears an organza shirt with hand-stitched ribbons and waistcoat by John Galliano, *Les Incroyables*, 1984.
Bottom left: Photograph by Mark Lebon. Lily Colfox wears a Comme des Garçons ruffle dress, 2002, from Steven Philip Studio, and a swan-feather headpiece from the Harlech Archive.

Joya & Alma Berrow
Bottom right: Photograph by Mark Lebon. Alma Berrow wears a ceramic crown and a hand-embroidered jacket and ceramic buttons, both by Alma Berrow, a button pink ring, button-thread ring by Judy Blame and button ring by Available Nowhere; Joya Berrow wears a scarf by Available Nowhere pinned by Carley Hague, and a Judy Blame three-button ring.

Right: Joya Berrow
Photograph by Joya Berrow.

Left: Else Korsvoldgard
Photograph by Dag Thorenfeldt.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Dave Baby wears a unique stencil-printed jacket and trousers from Nemeth × Dave Baby, Nemeth Spring/Summer 2021.

Left: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Lily Gavin wears a wedding dress by Maison Martin Margiela, Autumn/Winter 1992, from Adrian Appiolazza Archive, a headpiece from the Harlech Archives, shoes by Ancuta Sarca, and her own socks.
Text by Lily Gavin.

Right: Yvonne Gold
Potential: Spaciousness
Creative direction by Yvonne Gold. Photograph by Milo Reid. Set design by Brad Gilbert.

Left: Jean-Baptiste Mondino
Photographs of John Galliano by Jean-Baptiste Mondino. Mashed by Mark Lebon.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Georgia Howorth wears cotton trench coat by JW Anderson, Spring 2021, carved wooden bracelets by Dave Baby, and pumps from the Harlech Archive.

Left: Jason Evans
Photograph by Jason Evans.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Top left: Photograph by Mark Lebon. Lauren Jones and Alex Collishaw wear Dr. Noki's NHS Custom Street Couture; Dolly Jones wears Noki scarves and Dr. Noki's NHS Custom Street Couture; baby Gene wears his own clothes; Daisy Jones wears Custom Noki for Steven Philip Studio. Bottom right: Photograph by Mark Lebon. Kailash Bharti wears linen priest coat by Maison Martin Margiela, Autumn/Winter 1992, from Adrian Appiolaza Archive and Vintage Archive, his own trousers, and Mark Lebon's shoes; Tessa Edwards wears leather dress, harness and glove sleeves by Maison Martin Margiela, Autumn/Winter 1992/1993, from Adrian Appiolazza Archive and Vintage archive, and her own jewellery and sandals.
Bottom left: Portraits by mondaywasspecial of Mark Lebon at his favourite eating spots: thanks to Chad and son at Brinkworth Dairy, Queens Park Farmers' Market; Ruth and Billy at Cockney's, Portobello Road; Caterina and Giuseppe at Panella London, Golborne Road; and Muhammad at the Moroccan opposite the o'porto.

Grace Berrow
Top right: Photography and text by Grace Berrow.

Left: Pepe and his pussycat. Photograph by Mark Lebon.

Right: Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech
Photograph by Mark Lebon. Georgia Howorth wears dark blue heroic-cut Recicla pea coat embroidered with clear material sequins, worn with a white thermocollant dress over transparent tights, a white thermocollant loincloth and white thermocollant ghillies, Maison Margiela Artisanal by John Galliano, Autumn/Winter 2020.

Left: Central photograph by Mark Lebon: Ella Jones wears customized Dior Shirt inked and styled by Mark Lebon and a badge featuring Nikolai von Bismarck; tape creative direction by Tallulah Harlech; mug by Miranda Berrow. Background photograph by Jason Evans from House of Beauty and Culture Archive, with handkerchief by Judy Blame.

Right: Juergen Teller
Frozen Dead Dog (1993)
Photograph by Jeurgen Teller. Mashed by Mark Lebon.

Left: Miranda Berrow
Photographs by Miranda Berrow.

Right: Hugo Scott
Metallika Ball 2016-2018
Photographs by Hugo Scott. Mashed by Mark Lebon.
Special thanks to Kamari Miyake Mugler.

Stephanie Nash & Anthony Michael
Jewellery by Judy Blame.
Graphic design by Stephanie Nash.

Top left: Izzy Russell
THANK U LOVE IZZY handpainted shirt by Izzy Russell.

Top right: Lui Nemeth
Back of *Three Graces, 1992*
Artwork by Lui Nemeth.

Bottom left: Riyo Nemeth
Artwork by Riyo Nemeth.

Stephanie Nash & Anthony Michael
Jewellery by Judy Blame.
Graphic design by Stephanie Nash.

Juergen Teller & Dovile Drizyte
Photograph of Mark Lebon and Juergen Teller by Dovile Drizyte. Fanny font by Dave Baby.
Mickey Mouse by Hank Lebon.

Mark Lebon & Amanda Harlech Images
Photographer: Mark Lebon. Stylist: Amanda Harlech. Creative assistance: Tallulah Harlech. Make-up: Joey Choy. Hairstylist: Nao Kawakami. Set designer: Jabez Bartlett. Producer: Anastasia Ehrich. Associate producer: Marta Cruañas. PNP producer: Claudia Poulter. On-set producer: Ana Castellar. Production assistant: Charles Farley. Production: DoBeDo Represents. Photo assistants: Rory Cole, Fred Smith, Brad Gilbert. Set-design assistant: Ellen Wilson. Cat the gentle retouch. Cinematographer: Tyrone Lebon. Videographer: Frank Lebon. Models: Guillaume André, Dave Baby, Kailash Bharti, Alice Colfox, Lily Colfox, Alex Collishaw, Tessa Edwards, Lily Gavin, Carmen Hall, Georgia Howorth @ Next Models, Jeny Howorth, Lauren Jones, Frank Lebon, Tyrone Lebon.

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Apron by Hugues Bermond
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Photograph: Bryanboy

The Shopping Questionnaire: Bryanboy

By Loïc Prigent

What is the last thing you bought?
Two hoodies – yellow and white – and a blue beanie from Celine.

Full price?
As if Celine would give me a discount!

What is the last thing you bought but didn't have to pay for?
My groceries. Praise-the-lord-hallelujah for having a husband with a day job.

What is the worst salesperson line to sell you stuff?
High-pitched voice, American accent, 'Hiiiiiiiiiii, how are you?' Nails on the chalkboard! Not today, Satan, not today.

Which brand has the best service?
Saint Laurent! It's always a chic experience and I love how they just leave you alone at the store and let you look at the things on the racks in peace. They're never rude; I like it.

Do you feel guiltier when you spend too much money or when the prices are suspiciously low?
Guilt is an emotion that doesn't exist in my vocabulary.

Tell me your best teenage memory of malls.
I used to be a Catholic and in 1995, Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines. I was peer-pressured into spending my allowance at the mall on this 'World Youth Day' bracelet. I was 13 at the time. Then we all went to Levi's to look at jeans, but we all left the shop empty-handed and I told myself one day if I were rich I would buy the whole store. I am still waiting for that to happen.

Which brand serves the best coffee on its shop floor?
I never have coffee while shopping. A proper retail therapy session is like self-medicating at a rave or club. Why induce a comedown that fast?

What was your worst shopping experience?
Nothing severely traumatic. I've experienced micro-aggressions, especially in Europe. It rarely happens, but when it does, I just laugh it off. For example, in Paris, I have seen a white sales staff member visibly nudge his Asian colleague to help me – only for that colleague to come over and say, 'Ni hao!'

Tell me something clever about shopping and reinvention and self-confidence and spending.
Everything and everyone in this world may have a price tag, but it doesn't cost a single penny to dream.

What will be the name of your high-fashion store, how will your salespeople be dressed, and what will be their pick-up line with customers?
It will be called RPC, which stands for Rich People Clothes. I want my salespeople to be dressed like those L'Avenue and Hotel Costes staff: daytime slutty bourgeois. My employees are mostly working for me because they want that wholesale discount. I don't want my staff to look like they work in a funeral parlour or a make-up counter earning minimum wage. No one will be wearing all black with those little name tags. The customer interaction is going to be absolutely minimal because my girls are going to be way too busy scrolling on their Instaglam to initiate a sales push.

What is the best aspect of shopping for you?
The never-ending cycle of spending and hustling. I love working very hard and rewarding myself.

In which store do you wish to be buried and what should be written on your tombstone?
Prada Milano Montenapoleone. I want my tombstone on the ground floor of the men's shop – 'This is where it all began; this is where it ended.'

MARINE SERRE

N.G. STUDIO. PARIS.

Nicolas Ghesquière

LOUIS VUITTON